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Across the Continent on Wings; or, Frank Reade, Jr.'s Greatest Flight.
By "NONAME."



Just then a shriek burst from Harry, who was some distance away with Barney. Frank turned and looked in that direction, and was horrified at seeing him tumbling toward the earth in a confused mass of wings. A wild cry of alarm burst from Frank, Sr., and Pomp and Barney.

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ACROSS THE CONTINENT ON WINGS;

OR,

Frank Reade, Jr.'s Greatest Flight.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr.'s 'Sea Serpent,' or, The Search for Sunken Gold," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

FRANK READE, JR., AND HIS FATHER.

"I SAY, father?"

"Well, what is it?"

"That's what I want to know myself," replied Frank Reade, Jr., to his father one bright, sunny afternoon, in the field near the old homestead at Readestown, "for I have been watching you for a week."

"You have, eh?"

"Yes, sir; and I give it up."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that. I hope you won't begin it again. It is not very pleasant to know that you are being watched."

"On the contrary, I think you rather enjoy it, for I am sure you have known all along that I was watching you."

"There is where you are mistaken. I have been too busy to notice what you were doing."

"You have been pretty busy, I know; but you must have known I was watching and wondering all the time what you were up to."

"Well, can't you figure it out for yourself?"

"No, sir; I give up, and now ask you to tell me all about it."

"What have you seen me doing?"

"Why, I've seen you watching the crows through a telescope all day long as they flew over the field."

"Couldn't you see anything else?"

"No, sir; that was all. What you did in your workshop I don't know, as I didn't intrude there."

"Well, suppose you wait a month or two, and see what comes of watching the flights of crows?"

"I hardly think that would be fair, father."

"Why not, pray?"

"Because I would have no rest thinking about it. My curiosity has been excited, and I want to know what you are up to."

"Don't you think the times have gone wrong when a father has to give an account of himself to his son?"

Frank, Jr., laughed.

"You can't get out of it that way, father," he said. "You are in search of an idea for a purpose. I am sure you have not turned naturalist just for love of the occupation. What are you bothering the crows for?"

"Well, I didn't know I was 'bothering the crows,'" said the elder Reade, laughing. "In fact, I didn't know the crows were aware I was taking any notice of them."

"Come, father, let up. What are you up to?"

"Well, if I must tell—I was watching the crows."

Frank, Jr.'s, knees gave way under him, and he sank down on the grass in an apparently helpless condition.

"What's the matter with you?" his father asked.

"That tremendous revelation was too much for me, father; I couldn't stand up to it."

His father laughed, and said:

"Why, my dear boy, it such an inkling as that dawns you, how do you expect to stand up to all that is back of it?"

"Oh, I'll brace up," replied Frank, "if you'll touch it off easy and let me know what's coming," and he rose to his feet and brushed the dust off his clothes. "You said you were watching the crows."

"Yes, I believe I did."

"For what purpose?"

"To see how they fly."

"Oh!" and the look of disgust on the young inventor's face set his father in a roar.

He made his way back to the house and met his wife and mother seated on the piazza.

"Mother," he said, "I am uneasy about father."

"Why, what's the matter, Frank?" exclaimed his mother, in evident alarm.

"I think he is off his base—something wrong up here," and he tapped his forehead significantly as he spoke. "He is acting very strangely out in the field there."

Mrs. Reade sprung up and threw on a shawl and bonnet. Frank's wife did likewise, and in another minute they were ready to run anywhere in their excitement.

"Where is he?" his mother asked. "What is he doing?"

"He is in the field back of the barn, watching the crows through a telescope as they fly over."

"Is that all?" exclaimed young Frank's wife. "Pshaw! He has been at that for over a week. He is no more crazy than I am. You need a spanking, Frank."

"What's he watching the crows for?" Frank's mother asked.

"Hanged if I know," replied the young inventor. "I can't get anything out of him."

Mrs. Reade and young Frank's wife went out behind the barn, and there found the elder Reade very intently watching a couple of crows on the wing.

"Why don't you fly a kite, Frank?" Mrs. Reade asked; "you would have—"

"Because you would want to hold the string all the time," was the prompt reply, "when I haven't the time to be bothered with you."

"Bother!"

"Yes. You had better go back to the house, both of you, before some old crow swoops down on you and makes a meal of you."

"Frank, are you crazy?" his wife asked, looking hard at him.

"Yes—as a loon," he answered, without once lowering the telescope.

The two women looked at him in silence for some time, and then turned and went back to the house, leaving him to watch the crows undisturbed.

"I guess he isn't much crazy, mother," remarked Mrs. Frank, Jr., as they entered the house.

"No, not much," was the reply. "He knows what he is doing, which we do not," and the good mother laughed quietly to herself. She had lived long enough with the great inventor to know that his head was all right.

That evening young Frank was in a restless humor. He went up to his room and tried to read, but had to give it up. He came down again and went in search of his father. He found him in his little work room, poring over a lot of drawings spread out on a table.

His father looked up at him in a quizzical sort of way as he entered the room.

"Go on with your work, father," said Frank, Jr. "Don't mind me—I won't bother you."

The elder Reade laughed a low, chuckling laugh, and said:

"I see I can't keep my affairs a secret from you, so I may as well let you know that I am trying to get the correct theory of wing-flying."

"Wing-flying?"

"Yes—to understand it as the birds do. They seem to understand it to the utmost."

Young Frank was amazed.

What was his father up to, anyway?

"I don't know that I quite understand you, father," he said, after an interval of silence.

"Well, I thought I spoke plainly enough. I

am trying to find out the theory of wing-flying."

"I thought you had seen enough of flying machines and air ships to understand all that by this time, father," said the young inventor.

"Well, I don't, *nor do you*," replied his father. "I've flown all round the world, anyhow," said Frank, Jr., with a knowing wag of his head.

"But not as the birds fly."

Young Frank was interested.

"Flying is flying, is it not?" he asked.

"Yes, but really I don't think you ever flew ten feet in your life."

"Oh, come off now."

"Well, does a man fly when he goes up in a balloon?"

"No, sir."

"Neither does one in your air-ship or flying machine. A balloon is lifted by the gas inside of it, and floats with the wind. An air-ship is raised by the rotopscope, and propelled by other means. Now the bird raises himself with his wings, steers right and left, goes against the wind or with it—fast or slow, all by and through a thorough knowledge of the science of wing-flight. That is the science I am trying to catch on to."

Young Frank was in a fever of delight.

He had long thought his father was done with inventions.

Here he was seeking to master the secret that man had been groping after ever since Adam watched the flight of birds in the Garden of Eden.

"Why, father!" Frank exclaimed, "that is an idea that has troubled me for years. What are you going to do if you master the science?"

"I really don't know. I've been thinking of it for years. Perhaps you had better take it up where I am now, and work it out. Your mother would make trouble if she gets the idea in her head that I, an old grandfather, was trying to fly like the birds."

"Yes, I think she would," and father and son laughed heartily as they stood over the table of drawings.

"Of course she would. She would call me an old fool, and destroy all these drawings as soon as she could get her hands on them."

"How much progress have you made?" Frank asked, taking up a drawing of a bird's wing, and scrutinizing it closely.

"I think I have caught the secret, but have not been able to conceive any mechanical method of applying it. By watching birds on the wing I have discovered that their wings are shaped in accordance with their habits of life. Those accustomed to long flights have much larger wings, in proportion to their size and weight, than those that live nearer the earth and in the trees. The crow, for instance, have wings adapted for long flights, while the quail have small ones, with bodies much heavier in proportion."

"Yes, I can understand all that, father, but it's their thorough knowledge of the science that enables them to fly."

"Of course. I have found out that the same science is used in sailing a ship, in some instances. To raise himself the bird makes a spring, and spreads and flops his wings. Then, when he wishes to go forward, he makes quick downward motions, followed by backward pushes. The two motions form graceful curves, and serve a double purpose—to keep up in the air and to dart forward. Then, if he wishes to go higher, he propels himself forward with his wings turned so that wind forces him upward. Some use the tail as a rudder; but I have seen birds with no tails going with as much ease and precision as those with them. They slacken the

motions of the left wing if they wish to turn to the left, and *vice versa*, elevating the other."

"It is a beautiful and interesting study, isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed. I don't know when I have been more interested in anything. Do you think you can get up an apparatus that will enable you to accompany the birds in their flight?"

"I think I can, with your assistance," replied Frank.

Then I'll turn the job over to you," said his father, and they shook hands over the matter.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW INVENTION A COMPLETE SUCCESS.

LEFT in charge of the drawings, the young inventor pored over them day and night, growing more enthusiastic as he progressed. His father came to his assistance every day, and both worked together like heroes. Mrs. Reade, Sr., wondered what they were up to, but she had seen them so much absorbed over other inventions in the past that she did not regard it as anything unusual.

But young Mrs. Reade was more concerned. She had now been married to Frank five years, and had two beautiful little children. During that time Frank had sailed around the world and to the Arctic regions in his air-ship; visited Africa to rescue the young English lord and his sister, leaving her at home to suffer the tortures of suspense during his absence.

Thinking that he might again be inventing something that would take him away from home for a time, she went into the workshop and asked him what he was making.

"My dear," he replied, "I am simply experimenting, just as I've been doing for years. Why do you ask?"

"Because I don't want you to invent anything that's going to take you away from home again."

"Oh!" and Frank looked at her in some surprise for a few moments. "Is that the way the wind blows?"

"Yes, and it's going to blow hard, too, if you don't heed it."

"That's queer," remarked Frank.

"Nothing queer about it. You have a wife and two children, and—"

"Oh—yes—that's so. Well, don't let the wind blow till you see me going away again," and he kissed her in his old affectionate way.

"You won't go away again, will you, Frank?" she asked.

"I can't say. I have no idea at present of ever going further from home than Chicago. Don't make me promise anything more than to love you always, and take care of you and the children. I promise that with all my heart."

She could not resist such talk as that, and so she returned to the house satisfied with her visit.

In the meantime, Frank was busier than ever before in his life. He drew diagram after diagram, and then made models in pursuance of the plans on paper. Then he would concoct a series of fine steel works which controlled the joints of two immense wings made of triple layers of the strongest silk that could be found.

The joints worked well, and seemed to be inspired with life in doing what was required of them. But the machine that was to control and move them in every direction, as the birds move their wings in flight, was yet to be made.

He knew what he wanted, but how to get it was the thing that puzzled him more than any problem he ever struck.

But he was not the man to be balked in his pursuit of an object.

He kept on, day and night, consulting his father several times a day. But both of them kept the matter a profound secret from their wives. The women knew that something was going on, but never dreamed as to what it was.

By and-by Frank whispered to his father that he thought he had the thing right.

Frank, Sr., went out to the workshop to inspect the invention, and Frank, Jr., locked the door after him as they came in. He didn't want anybody to know anything about it till he was assured of success.

Frank's father saw a slender framework, about three and a half feet high, on the floor. It had so many intricate pieces of belting, wires, and slender steel rods connected with it that the elder inventor was puzzled.

"Hanged if I can make head or tail of it, Frank," he said, after gazing at the machine for several minutes.

"Well, there's the wings," said the young inventor, pointing to several layers of silk folded against a sort of knapsack on the top of the framework. "And in this inclosed place down here in rear of the frame is a very powerful electric battery to work the wings."

"Work 'em by electricity?"

"Yes. I can get more power with less weight from an electric battery than by any other machine. Here are the handles which connect with the battery and the wings, enabling one to fly in any direction. Of course one must understand how to work it, just as one must know *how* to skate ere he can do it."

"Do you think you can do it?" his father asked.

"I think I understand the theory, but will have to practice with it ere I can fly, I suppose."

"Yes, of course. Suppose you wrap it up in a cloth, and have Pomp take it out to the field beyond the grove to-morrow, where you can try it without being seen by any one."

"Just what I was thinking about," remarked Frank, and as he had the machine in complete order, he proceeded to wrap a large tarpaulin around it.

The next day, in the afternoon, he called Pomp in and told him to take up the bundle and follow him.

Pomp looked suspiciously at the bundle, and asked:

"What am yer got dar, Marse Frank?"

"Never mind what it is, Pomp," answered Frank. "Take it up and come along with father and me."

Pomp knew that the young inventor had been for weeks and months busily engaged on something new. He suspected that it was some new kind of an electric machine, and if there was anything in the world he was really afraid of, it was electricity.

"Looker heah, Marse Frank!" he exclaimed, shaking his woolly head. "What am dis heah?"

"Oh, take it up and bring it along, Pomp. I've no time to lose now."

"Am dere any ob dat bottled lightnin' in it, Marse Frank?" he asked, stooping to touch it gingerly. "Kase ef dere is, I'se gwine for to lef' it er lone, I is."

"There is no bottled lightning about it now, Pomp," said the young inventor. "Take it up and come on."

Pomp took up the bundle and followed them out of the house.

Frank and his father led the way through the barn-yard, and passed out into a field beyond.

Passing through the woods on the farther side of the field, they entered a clearing of some two acres or more.

Arriving in the center of this clearing, Frank ordered Pomp to put down the bundle, and proceeded to open it.

Pomp stood by and watched the young inventor with a degree of interest that was amusing to Frank and his father.

When the cloth was removed, Frank got inside the frame-work, and proceeded to make it fast to his body by means of several broad belts of strong leather, which he buckled securely.

"This holds the whole business firmly to the body," he said to his father, as he buckled the belts around him. "The electric battery is behind me, out of the way, in the lower part of the inclosed case, and the machinery just above it. These handles—about a dozen of them—in front of me here, so that I can touch them at any moment. Each handle is marked to designate its use and purpose, so no mistake can be made if I keep cool and know what I am doing. Each handle connects with the joints of the wings, and—"

"De lor' gorrmighty!" gasped Pomp, speaking for the first time.

"What's the matter, Pomp?" Frank asked.

"Did yer say wings, Marse Frank?"

"Yes, I believe I did."

"An' is yer gwine ter fly er gin, Marse Frank?"

"I am going to try to, if you'll hold yer jaw."

"Yes, sah—Ise gwine to hol' to de airth, too, I is."

Frank went on to explain to his father the make of the machine.

"You see two large covered saddle stirrups below there," he said, pointing down to his feet to a pair of stirrups similar to those used by cavalrymen. "When the wings lift me I put my feet in them and stand if I like, or I can rest on the belts, as either way will do as well. This leaves my hands free to manage the wings by means of the handles."

"I think I understand the theory very well," said Frank's father. "Now let's see how it will work."

"Well, stand out of the way, and give the wings free play."

His father and Pomp moved back out of the way, and then the young inventor touched the handle that set the electric battery going.

In another moment he touched the handle that controlled the wings, and the folds of silk seemed to be endowed with life. They sprung up and spread out like the wings of a great dragon.

Then they began to beat the air, raising a breeze that forced the elder Reade and Pomp to place their hands on their hats to keep them on their heads.

The motions increased to such a force as to send the gravel stones flying with the breeze. Suddenly Frank gave a bound upward, and the wings carried him up with the greatest ease. The higher he ascended the easier they seemed to carry him.

"Oh, de Lor' sabe 'im!" groaned Pomp. "Dat boy gwine ter broke his neck, suah! De Lor' gwine ter punish 'im some day. He am too sassy. Marse Frank, youse orter make 'im stay whar de Lor' put 'im. Man ain't got no business flyin' like dat."

The elder Reade was too busy watching Frank to pay any attention to what Pomp was saying. He saw Frank go up some two hundred feet or more and move about with perfect ease. The great silk wings, shaped precisely like those of an eagle's, seemed to respond to every touch of the handles with the greatest ease.

"It is a success!" cried young Frank, up in the air.

"Yes," said his father, "a complete success. Come down."

Frank let himself down as gently as he could, and his father rushed forward and shook hands with him.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE WING—WESTWARD HO!

FRANK and his father shook hands for nearly three minutes, congratulating each other on the success of the experiment with wings.

"It is much better than I expected," said his father.

"Yes, better than I expected, too," replied Frank. "I had no idea it would work with so much ease at first. It seemed to be just right in every joint."

"It's the luckiest invention you ever got up."

"Me! Why, father, it is your invention!" exclaimed Frank, shaking his father's hand again and again.

"No, it's yours, Frank," said the elder Reade, returning the hand-shaking.

"No, sir; I would never have thought of it but for you. I shall insist on you bearing the honor, father."

"Oh, we all happen to know that you *did* get it up," persisted his father; "so we won't say any more about it."

This generous self-denial on the part of both of them fully attests the love and respect that exists between the father and son, both of whose names are known throughout the world as the greatest inventors of the age.

Pomp stood by gazing at the winged machine in open-eyed wonder. The great wings were now folded again, and the machine seemed as innocent of flying as Pomp did himself.

"Well, Pomp, old man!" exclaimed Frank, extending his hand to the faithful old dorky. "Give us a shake, and tell us what you think of this new idea, and he grasped Pomp's hand and shook it till his teeth rattled.

"I tink you'se better stop all dis foolishness, Marse Frank," replied old Pomp. "You'se ain't got no bizness flyin' up dere like de birds, no-how."

"Why, old man, you've been up above the clouds many a time. What's the matter with you?"

"I ain't gwine up dere any more till I dies," said Pomp, shaking his head.

"Are you sure of going up there, then?" Frank asked.

"I ain't suah ob nuffin' in dis worl'," replied Pomp, "an' dat's er fac', but I doan want ter go up dere afore my time."

"Oh, I understand. You had better take a pair of wings now while you can get 'em, for fear you may not get any when you die."

"Lor' sabe dat boy!" groaned Pomp. "He am too sassy ter lib. Whar you gwine ter go wid dat new mersheen, Marse Frank?"

"I don't know yet, Pomp. Don't think I'll go anywhere. But look here. Don't you say a word about this till I give you permission to do so."

"No, sah. I won't say nuffin'."

"I want to try it, Frank," said the elder Reade, as young Frank unfastened the belts and stepped out of the little frame work.

"Yes, father, try it. You'll be astonished to see how easily it works."

In a few minutes the original inventor of the steam man of the plains was secure in the frame-work of the machine. But he spent ten minutes or more studying the handles, each of which was marked so as to be easily understood. He did not care to run any risks by not understanding the workings of the machine.

"I guess I understand them now," he said, after a careful study of the works. Then he set the battery in motion. The wings spread out again and began moving like the wings of a great dragon. Frank Reade, Sr., was at least thirty pounds heavier than Frank, Jr., and hence required more power to raise him.

But he waited for the wings to lift him, and then made a spring upward. The ascent was quite sudden, and for a moment or two he was quite disconcerted. Yet he succeeded in controlling it quite as well as Frank had done, and made a complete circuit of the clearing.

He then descended, alighting a little more clumsily than Frank did, but was not hurt in any way.

"Now you try it, Pomp," suggested Frank, turning to the old dorky.

"No, sah," exclaimed Pomp. "Dis hyer nigger wasn't born ter fly. My hoofs am my wings," and he turned and trotted away with considerable speed.

"Well, come back and take the thing home again," sung out Frank, and the old dorky obeyed. But he had firmly resolved not to attempt any flying business. He considered that as man was not born with wings his business was to keep near the ground.

On the way back home Frank and his father conversed together in low tones. Said his father: "I am going to duplicate it. I want one for myself for my own use."

"Good!" exclaimed Frank. "We'll take a trip together."

"Yes. I think I could enjoy a trip on wings. I begin to feel young again."

"Of course you do. You are just in your prime now. I'll build two more for myself."

"What do you want so many for?"

"Why, for Barney and Pomp."

"Why, bless your soul, you can't persuade either of them to fly."

"Oh, I can talk them into anything. I wouldn't think of leaving home without one or both of them. They are indispensable to me."

"So I found them when I was traveling. But I guess you'll have a time of it trying to get Pomp to fly. He doesn't believe in that kind of business anyway."

"Oh, never mind what he believes in. I know that he believes in me, and that's all I want to know about him. He'll fly as high as the highest. Just let me manage him."

Pomp never heard a word of the conversation. He was in advance of them, and very busy with his own thoughts.

But he kept the matter of the invention a profound secret from even Barney O'Shea, his companion and chum in so many voyages.

Frank and his father went to work like Trojans to make three more machines. Frank soon concluded to make an extra one and invite one of his old college chums to go with him on a trip to California and back. Accordingly, he and his father made four. They were done in a month.

When finished, Frank telegraphed to New York to Harry Burleigh to join him in Readestown without delay, if he wanted to have some fun.

Harry replied that he would start the next day. Frank met him in Chicago, and on the way out to Readestown explained to him the nature of the trip they were going to take.

"Good heavens, Frank!" exclaimed Harry. "I'd break my neck before I had flown a hundred yards."

"Don't you believe that, old man," said Frank. "You can learn a thing as well as I can. Pomp, Barney and my father are all going with us, and we'll have a high old picnic before we get back."

They reached Readestown that night, and the next day each one, including Barney and Pomp, took a machine on his back and marched out to the clearing beyond the grove back of the barn.

Neither Barney or Pomp suspected that they were to be taught how to fly.

But when they reached the clearing, and saw the others buckling on the machines, they kicked. Frank knew their weak points.

"Say," he exclaimed to Barney, "are you afraid? Pomp is a better man than you any day." "Bedad, av he floyes I'll floy over 'im or break a wing," replied Barney.

Pomp was quaking in his shoes, but he would have suffered martyrdom ere he would have permitted Barney to know it.

Thus the young inventor had them in hand without the least bit of trouble. He showed them how to use the wings. They watched him closely and soon caught the idea.

"You can learn to fly as easily as you learned how to skate," he said.

"Whin I skated," said Barney, "I slipped an' fell on the ice, an' was there, begob. Where will I be av I slip in this thing?"

"Ketch on ter de clouds, Barney," said Pomp, grinning fearlessly at him.

"Bedad, it's yer wool I'll be afther grabbing, ye spalpeen."

"You'se cain't fly fast enuff to ketch me, Barney."

"Just pay attention to father and me," said Frank, "and you'll all three get the hang of it in a few minutes."

Then Frank and his father flew up and around them so easily that Barney, Pomp and Harry were all very eager to try it.

Pomp essayed it first, and did so well that he fairly shouted with joy.

"Hi, Barney!" he cried, "jes' see dis bird fly!"

"Bedad, it's a crow I see!" replied Barney, alluding to his color, at which the others laughed heartily.

"Suah ob dat, Barney?" Pomp asked, as he sailed around the clearing just above the tree-tops. "Crows am mighty smart birds."

"Try your hand now, Barney," said Frank, and the Irishman at once spread himself.

He did about as well as Pomp, much to his delight, and came down somewhat clumsily.

Then Harry tried it.

He was very nervous at first, but finally succeeded in mastering the secret.

They practiced all day, and then went home.

A week of daily practice made them all proficient on the wing.

"We will start on Monday," said Frank Reade, Sr., "and wing our way across the Continent to San Francisco and back. I think we will astonish the world. Some people will think the world is coming to an end when they see men flying through the air."

The father and son had talked their wives into acquiescing to their plans, promising to be back in a month or less time.

Accordingly, on Monday each one, armed with a revolver and a light rifle, started up on the wing from the front yard of the Reade residence. They sailed round and round over the town for some ten minutes or more, enjoying the consternation of the people below, who ran out of their houses and turned their blanched faces skyward.

After hovering over the town long enough to satisfy the curiosity of the people, they started westward in a straight line.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR HEROES ARE SHOT AT FOR GAME.

OUR heroes were indeed on the wing. They were actually flying through the air like so many birds.

It was a novel sensation.

Every one of them, however, had a certain fear tugging at his heart.

They realized that the least accident to the machinery, or a mistake in the working of the wings, would precipitate them to earth a thousand feet below.

No wonder, then, that not a word was spoken for the first half hour after the flight began.

Each was busy with his own thoughts and fears. He studied the handles that controlled the wings, and kept his hands on them ready for instant action.

Frank was the first to break silence.

"This is glorious!" he exclaimed.

"Glorious!" echoed Burleigh, "but I can hardly shake off the feeling of terror that hints at the consequence of accident."

"Shake it off, Harry," said Frank, Sr. "Even if anything broke, there is spread of canvas in the wings to let you down easy. How is it with you, Pomp?"

"Ise er flyin', Marse Frank," answered Pomp; "but ef I meets er whirlwind, or er slycone, I dunno what I'll do."

"What's a slycone, Pomp?"

"Why, don't you know, Marse Frank? It's er storm what smashes up ebery ting it catches."

"Oh! you mean a cyclone!"

"Yes, sah, er slycone, dat's hit. Ef er slycone hits us we am done fo', suah."

"But we can almost tell when a storm is coming by the clouds," said Frank, Jr., "and can have time to fly over it."

"De Lor' sabe us! Fly ober er slycone! Youse done gone an' lost yer head, Marse Frank!"

"Why, you old coward!" exclaimed the young inventor. "You've sailed above storm-clouds several times, and I was with you, too."

"Dat's er fac', Marse Frank, but it was in de air-ship."

"So it was; but you are an air-ship yourself now. How does it go, Barney?"

"Bedad, it's a birrud I am!" said the jolly Irishman. "Shure, an' phat's the use av walkin' whin yez have wings?"

"That's what I say. But why don't you put your feet in the stirrups and stand up as I do? You'd find it much more comfortable."

Barney had been so excited over the novelty

of flying like a bird that he had forgotten all about the stirrups. He looked down at Frank's feet, and saw that he was standing erect, and as comfortable as though on *terra firma*.

"Bedad, it's a loive fool I am," he remarked, as he put his feet in the stirrups. "Sure an' it isn't flying whin I shtand up."

Frank laughed and turned to his old college-mate, Burleigh, and asked:

"How do you make out, Harry?"

"Splendid!" was the enthusiastic reply. "It beats anything I ever dreamed of. Do you have any idea how fast we are going?"

"No. I might make a mental calculation from sighting objects below."

"How high are we?"

Harry looked him full in the face as he asked the question.

He really wanted to go lower, but did not like to suggest it to any one. He was brave, but had a cautious head as well as stubborn pride.

"I should say we are all of a thousand feet above the earth," replied Frank, looking at the surface below. "But I have been up fully three miles in the air-ship."

"Just look at those people on that farm down there," said Frank, Sr., as they passed over a large, well-cultivated farm. "They are scared out of their wits."

All five looked down, and saw a dozen laborers throw down their hoes and plows and break for the house.

"Hi, hi, hi!" yelled Pomp, not able to resist the inclination to add to the farmers' fears.

"Hold your tongue!" cried Frank. "They would know that was a nigger's voice even among the angels."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp. "Dey'll all know it when I get's up dar."

"Howly Moses, phat an angel!" exclaimed Barney.

"What's de matter wid youse, Barney? Doan't I fly as good as yerself?"

"Bedad, an' so does a crow, but I'm thinkin' they don't let 'em come into the bird heaven," replied Barney.

"Hello!" exclaimed Burleigh, in great alarm. "They have got guns and are going to shoot at us!"

"Hi, dar!" yelled Pomp, at the top of his voice. "Hole on dar, I tole yer!"

"Crack, crack, bang!" went three guns in rapid succession.

Each of the five men held his breath in momentary expectation of receiving a charge of shot.

Ten, twenty, thirty seconds passed and no one had been touched. Then a half minute more passed, and they knew they were too high up for the shot to reach them.

But the excited farmers blazed away again, hoping to bring down one of the strange birds.

"Howly Moses!" exclaimed Barney, "it's shootin', is it? Bedad, it's fun whin the birruds shoot too," and he blazed away at the farmers with his revolver.

"Thunder and lightning!" gasped Frank Reade, Sr. "That fool will get us into trouble! Stop that, Barney!"

"Another shot!" cried Frank, "and I'll put a bullet through your head, you fool!"

"Bedad, we are targets, thin!" growled Barney, putting his revolver back in its place. "Bad luck till the day whin I can't be afther givin' ther bloody haythins shot for shot."

"They can't hit us," said Frank, Jr.: "besides, they don't know that we are human beings."

"By this time they were a mile beyond the farmers', sailing westward."

The incident, however, set our heroes to thinking.

Frank, Sr., was quite serious.

"I never thought of it before," he said, turning to Frank, Jr., and Harry, "but we will have to be very careful how we fly near the earth in strange places where they have not heard of us, or else we are liable to get shot."

"I was thinking about that myself," remarked Harry. "When I saw them aim at us I fairly held my breath in expectation of receiving a load of shot. It was lucky we were out of range."

"Dat's er fac'," put in Pomp, who was near enough to hear what was said. "De lor' sabe us, but I was nebbber skeered so much in my life."

"There's another farm over there," remarked Frank, Jr., looking ahead, "and men are at work in the fields. Let's see what they will do."

The men in the field were busy plowing, and did not look up till the young inventor told Pomp to give a yell, so as to attract their attention.

Pomp let out a yell that was simply terrific.

"Bedad!" exclaimed Barney, "his lung is busted!"

"Look!" exclaimed Harry, who was watching the men below; "they see us!"

The farmers let go their plows and stared up-

ward in wondering surprise. Then they ran together and gesticulated wildly, showing both fear and intense excitement.

"They have no guns," said Frank, Sr., after looking carefully around the whole field, "and the house is a half mile away."

"I'll make a dive toward them," said young Frank, "and have some fun with them."

He touched the handles which controlled the wings, and bore on them steadily till the wings turned him in the right direction. The next moment he was diving earthward with the swift velocity of a hawk going for the young barnyard chicken.

The terrified farmers yelled like so many maniacs, and broke for cover.

But cover was half a mile away—at the house. "Hold on there," cried Frank. "What's the matter with you, anyhow?"

Hearing a man's voice coming from the strange thing overhead added speed to their heels.

They fairly shrieked as they bounded over the field toward the house.

Nothing that Frank could say would stop them, and so, after going low enough to enable him to kick the hat off the head of one of them, he rose again and started to rejoin his comrades.

When young Frank made the dive his father suggested that they circle around in the air to wait for him. They did so, and found that it was not a difficult thing to do after they got the hang of it.

"They were the worst scared set of men I ever saw in all my life," said Frank, Jr., as he came up. "I never saw men run so fast."

"Did you touch one of them?" his father asked.

"I kicked the hat off one of them," he said, "but didn't hurt him. The poor fellow yelled, 'Save me!' at the top of his voice, and ran like a wild turkey."

"Bedad, it's foine fun," said Barney.

"But if a man with a gun had been about you'd have been killed," said his father.

"Of course I would. We can't be too careful how we get down in range of shot-guns or rifles."

When the men dashed into the house, they went for the guns instantly. In another moment they were out in the yard, blazing away up at the five huge winged creatures in the air.

"They can't reach us," said Frank, Jr., chuckling. "I came back just in time."

"By George! I'm hit!" gasped Harry, turning pale, and squirming like an eel in his frame-work.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Frank, Sr. "Where are you hit?"

"On the thigh. Oh, Lord! how it hurts!"

"Ah! that fellow has a long-range rifle. A Winchester could reach us at this—By Heavens! there's another bullet! It just grazed my head! Up—up higher, for your lives!" and all five seized the handles and set the wings flopping at a terrible rate. Several bullets whistled by them; three struck Barney's wings, but did not go through.

In a minute more they were out of range, and the farmer had emptied the chamber of his Winchester.

"We are all right now," said Frank, Jr., "but it was a narrow escape."

"I should say it was," remarked his father. "Let's see where you are hit, Harry," and he flew round so as to get a view of Harry's leg.

"It's on my left leg above the knee," said Harry, looking down at his leg, "but I don't see any blood or even a hole in the trousers. The pain is there all the same, though."

"Ah, my dear boy," said Frank, Sr. "You made a narrow escape. It was a spent ball that struck you."

"But it hurts awful."

"Yes, they hurt like blazes, but don't do much harm. You will find a very tender, bruised spot where it struck, when you look at it to-night. You are lucky, though."

"I don't think so," said Harry. "I am the unlucky one of the party, as all of you got away unhurt."

"But you are lucky in not getting the bullet through your leg."

"Yes, and so are you in not getting it through your head."

"I think Harry is right, father," said Frank, Jr., laughing.

"Bedad," said Barney, "it's shot in the wing I am."

"The deuce! Were you hit?"

"Yis, sorr."

"Where?"

"On me roight wing."

Frank looked up at the wing and saw where the bullets had struck the silk. The marks were very plain. The silk had given way sufficient to resist the balls when they rebounded and fell to the earth.

Every hunter or marksman knows that silk is

one of the hardest substances to penetrate with a bullet, and that it is almost impossible to do so, unless it is pressed against a solid wall.

"Does it pain you much?" Frank asked, as he looked the Irishman in the face.

"Sure an' it gives me the heartache whin I can't shoot back at the haythins," replied Barney.

"That is something you must not do," said Frank, Jr., "without orders."

They were soon miles away from the scene of the last shooting, making their way westward at a fine rate.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST NIGHT OUT—THE BATTLE OF THE HAMS—POMP AND BARNEY.

THE air was in a fine condition for our heroes. They made good time westward for a couple of hours, and then came in sight of a good-sized village.

"Now we'll see some excited women and children," said Frank, Jr.

"But we want to be sure we are out of reach of long-range rifles," remarked Harry. "I don't care to taste any more lead. My leg pains me awfully."

"Oh, I guess we are out of range," said Frank, Sr., "for we are nearly a half-mile high."

"But I have heard of long-range guns reaching all of a mile."

"So have I, but not perpendicular."

"Well, that may make a difference. I want to be sure about it, though."

"Look dar!" cried Pomp, as a school of children ran out of the village school-house. "Dem chillun am skeered e'enmos' ter def."

The children had seen them the moment they ran outdoors.

Instantly a hullabaloo resulted.

They whooped and yelled like so many little maniacs. The teacher came out and looked up. She, too, was terror-stricken, and went scurrying off as fast as her feet could carry her.

"Let's circle round over the village and draw out the whole population," suggested the elder Reade.

They soared over the town, and then made a series of grand circles in the air.

The entire population turned out to gaze up at them. It was plainly seen that they were greatly excited.

"If we had a big trumpet now," said Frank, "we could make 'em think that Gabriel was coming."

"Yes, but it would be cruel to give 'em such a scare," said his father.

"I don't know that they would be any worse scared than they are now."

"Look dar!" cried Pomp, pointing toward a little garden directly under them; "dar's a man what am er saying his prayers as fas' as he kin. Golly, but he am skeered!"

"Look over there!" exclaimed Harry; "there's another man on his knees. I guess they are pretty badly scared."

"Of course they are," said Frank, Sr. "They don't know who or what we are, hence it is natural they should be frightened. Yet if we were not so completely out of range we'd soon find somebody shooting at us."

After amusing themselves some ten minutes or more watching the excited people of the village, they turned westward and sailed away. The villagers gazed after them as long as they could be seen, and then turned to talk about the strange visitors for weeks to come.

Rich fields of grain were seen everywhere near the village, showing that they were passing over a very fertile region. But along toward sunset they found the settlements sparse, and then came a wilder and more silent region. No signs of busy life were to be seen anywhere.

"I guess we are getting beyond the borders of civilization," remarked Harry Burleigh, looking at the grand panorama below.

"Oh, no—several hundred miles to the border yet," said Frank, Jr. "I've crossed the Continent in my air-ship two or three times, and know something about the great West. It is almost illimitable."

"When will we see Indians?"

"That's hard to say. They may be off in another direction when we strike their reservation. You never saw one?"

"Only tame ones—in the museums in New York," replied Harry, laughingly.

"Oh, I doubt if they ever had a genuine red-skin in a New York museum. You'll have a chance to see some of them in their natural element before we reach the Pacific."

"Will we have any trouble with them?" Harry asked.

"That depends upon whether they want trouble with us," replied Frank. "Generally speaking, if they think they can get away with

you with safety to themselves, they'll make trouble."

"There's a river ahead," said Frank, Sr., who was looking in that direction through a large field glass.

"Can we make it before sunset?" young Frank asked.

"I think we can."

"Let's try it and see."

They flopped their wings and made better time for the next half hour, and soon saw that they could make the river with ease.

"There goes a buck and two does," said Frank, Jr., pointing to three moving objects off on the right some distance away.

"Where?" Harry asked, looking eagerly in that direction.

Frank pointed them out.

"Ah! I see them. They haven't seen us yet."

"No. They won't see us, either, unless we get pretty close to them. We may as well have some fresh venison for supper. Let's swoop down on them and take in one of the does."

"Good!" exclaimed Frank, Sr. "I haven't had any fresh venison for some time."

They drew their large revolvers and made a downward swoop in the direction of the deer.

The timid animals did not see them until the noise of such large wings rushing through the air alarmed them.

Then they took to their heels and ran like the wind.

But wings can always beat feet, and so it proved in this instance.

"After them!" cried Frank, Jr., darting after them.

One of the does bounded to one side on being hit by a ball from Frank's revolver, and tried to make for the timber on the river bank.

But Barney and Pomp, who were both old hunters, pushed forward and opened fire on her. She gave one bound in the air and dropped dead in her tracks.

"That's meat enough for supper," remarked Frank, Sr.

"But it's several miles yet to the river," remarked Frank, Jr. "We must cut off what we need, and take it along with us."

"The two saddles will do."

"Yes, more than do. Barney, you and Pomp go down and take a saddle each, and tie it to your pack. She is not very large."

"Yis, sorr," replied Barney. "Come on, yer black crow," and he began to settle down on the ground near the prize.

But, somehow, Barney did not work the handles right, and the result was that he landed with such force as to roll over on the grass, and nearly knock the wind out of him.

"De lor' gorrarnighty, Barney!" exclaimed Pomp. "What de matter wid youse? Dat ain't no way ter do. See hyer, yer fool Irisher!" and he undertook to show Barney how to alight gracefully and easily. But by some mistake, probably because he had had more experience in flying than in alighting, he landed right on top of Barney.

"Howly Moses!" groaned Barney, "won't somebody shoot their crow? Is it a foot-block I am? Take your hoof off me, yer naygur, or, be the powers, it's a murderer I'll be!"

Their wings became tangled somewhat, and Barney, in trying to get upon his feet, made matters worse.

"Hole on dar, Barney!"

"Hold off there, yer naygur!" returned Barney, "or be the powers I'll be the death av yez!"

"Keep still, both of you!" cried Frank, Jr., alighting near them. "I'll get you all right in a minute or two."

Frank quickly unloosed himself from his machine, and went to Pomp's assistance.

Barney was mad as a hornet, and as soon as he was released from his machine he made a rush at Pomp to annihilate him. Pomp was suspicious that Barney would do so, and was on his guard. He turned and planted his head in the pit of Barney's stomach, and sent him rolling over on the grass.

Barney was all broke up.

For several minutes he was too sick to know what was the matter with him. All the breath, and nearly all the life, was knocked out of him.

"You have commenced the old racket again," said Frank, turning to Pomp. "Some day I'll shoot both of you dead in your tracks, and leave your carcasses to the coyotes. Out the hams off that doe as quick as you can."

"Yes, sah," said Pomp, turning promptly to obey. But he kept an eye on Barney. He knew the impulsive temperament of the Irishman, and was afraid he would rush at him, pistol in hand.

Barney pulled himself together by degrees and rose to his feet.

"You look sick, Barney," said Frank.

"Bedad, an' I'm as sick as I look," was the re-

ply. "But I'm well enough ter kill a naygur," and he began drawing his revolver.

"And I'm in just the humor to kill an Irishman," said Frank, also drawing his revolver. "You shoot Pomp, and I'll look after you."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Pomp. "Dat Irisher can't shoot wuf a cent!"

"Shut up, Pomp, and prepare to die!" said Frank.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Pomp again. Barney had the good sense to understand the situation. He put up his weapon, and turned away to cut up the doe without uttering another word.

"See here, Barney," said Frank, following him up. "You stumbled and fell when you landed, didn't you?"

"Yes, sorr."

"So did Pomp, and he stumbled over on you. He did not do it purposely, which you knew as well as I did. Yet you rushed at him when you got on your feet and butted your stomach against his head. Suppose you had killed him! Why in thunder don't you keep your temper?"

"Bedad, the naygur was afther killing me dead!" said Barney.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Pomp again.

That chuckle was too much for the irrepressible Barney.

He had just cut off one of the hams of the doe. The long hind leg had a good handle to it. He swung it around with all his might, and struck Pomp on the side of the head.

Pomp rolled over as if he had been shot.

But the blow did him no harm, as the plump fat ham was as harmless as a pillow.

He was on his feet in another moment, with the other ham in his hands.

Then came the battle of the hams, with the son of Ham on one side and a son of the ancient kings of Ireland on the other.

Whack!

Whack!

"Whoop!"

Whack!

"Hi, dar, you Irisher!"

"Ireland forever!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Oh, let up on that!" cried Frank, convulsed with laughter. "I want some of that venison for supper."

"Let 'em alone," said his father. "They'll make it tender."

They belabored each other till they were besmeared with the blood of the doe from head to foot, yet neither were hurt. Finally Frank compelled them to stop, and then gave them a lecture that made both feel very much ashamed.

CHAPTER VII.

A TERRIBLE FALL FROM MID-AIR.

THE trouble between Barney and Pomp having ended, Frank ordered them to take the saddles of venison and fasten them to their packs. Then they all rose on the wing again and made for the river, which was some four or five miles away.

They reached the river about sunset, and sought out a convenient spot for a camp. A short search revealed a bold spring under a dozen large cottonwood trees.

"Just the place we want," said Frank's father. "Plenty of spring water, and a good place to stretch our tent."

"Yes—and I am quite dry, too," remarked Frank, Jr. "Now, let's see if we can't alight without any accidents."

By exercising due caution they succeeded in landing without any mishaps, and then went briskly to work establishing a camp.

"Hurry up with the fire, Pomp," said Frank, Jr. "while Barney and I stretch the tent."

By carrying it in three parts they managed to have a large, roomy tent, which was soon put together and stretched under one of the big cottonwood trees. The flying machines were then stored carefully away inside. Barney and Pomp each had a small tent which they could put up at leisure.

"This is the cream of all excursions," remarked Harry, as he busied himself with whatever Frank told him to do.

"Ah! You haven't seen the cream yet, my boy," said the young inventor. "Just wait till we reach the wild peaks of the Rockies. Then you will enjoy going where the foot of man never trod before."

"By George! I never thought of that. That would be a novel sensation indeed."

"I found it so when I visited places where I knew no man could climb."

The tent was soon ready, and then preparations for the evening meal began. As they did not bring any provisions with them, they were compelled to eat simply venison, with the addition of salt and pepper.

"Oh, I can eat game without bread," said Harry.

"So can I," replied Frank, Jr., "and, to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I don't care much for bread, anyway."

They made a hearty meal, and then proceeded to make themselves comfortable for the night. They all smoked, and had plenty of pipes and tobacco with them.

"Do you think there are any Indians about this locality?" Harry asked, just before rolling in his blanket for the night.

"No. We haven't reached the Indian region yet. We will in a couple of days, however," said Frank, Jr., "so you may sleep and dream in peace, with no fear of losing your scalp before morning."

Harry felt much relieved, and was soon in a sound sleep.

When he awoke, the sun was just rising, and Pomp was broiling some venison steaks at the fire. All the others were up. They were early risers.

"You are just in time for breakfast," remarked Frank, Sr., as he came out of the tent.

"It is a good thing to be on time," he returned.

"So it is if you have an appetite, and there is anything to eat around."

They soon finished breakfast, and then struck tents.

In ten minutes everything was packed up, and they were ready for the start.

As the frame-work of the machines only came down to their knees, they could easily walk about with them when fastened on. When they rose on the wing, they placed their feet in the stirrups, and thus relieved the weight on the belts.

"Barney," said Frank, "make the start. I want to see how well you can do it."

"Bedad, it's a birrud I am," said Barney, at once setting his wings in motion.

In another minute he shot upward with great rapidity.

"Good-bye, Barney!" cried Pomp.

"You go next, Pomp," said Frank.

Pomp followed, and went up in good style.

Then Harry essayed to rise, and did quite well.

"Now, father, we'll follow them," and father and son rose up together.

The enormous wings made them look like immense dragons sailing through the air.

"I am sorry," said Frank to his father, "that we did not cover the frames in such a way as to make them resemble immense birds."

"Why so?" his father asked.

"Just for the effect it would have."

"Yes, it would puzzle more people, I guess."

"Of course it would, and it would have been more picturesque, too."

"So it would. Well, you can make the alterations when we return."

"Yes, so I could, but then the novelty would all have worn off. I guess we can have fun enough as they are."

They pushed forward in a straight westerly course till noon, and then veered in a southerly direction.

"We can see the railroad if we go that way," suggested Frank's father. "Nearly all the towns are on the line of the railroad."

In the middle of the afternoon they struck the railroad. Save where it was obscured by patches of timber, the road appeared like a couple of long threads running east and west as far as the eye could reach.

But they did not have much time to enjoy the scenery.

A strong breeze had begun to blow, which gave them no little trouble. The immense wings would at times jerk them about very unceremoniously. Had the wind been a steady blow they could have managed better, but it was not. It came in fitful gusts.

Suddenly Pomp found himself almost on his back, and for the moment lost his presence of mind. He let out a yell of terror that actually made the hair stand on the others' heads.

In another moment he righted himself, but he was the worst frightened man that ever flew.

"What's the matter, Pomp?" the young inventor asked.

"Afore de Lor', Marse Frank!" he whined, "I wants ter go down an' walk on de groun'."

"Why, what for?"

"De Lor' sabs us!" groaned the terrified ducky, "dese heah wings am 'witched. I can't do nuffin' wid 'em."

"You seem to be doing very well now," remarked Frank.

"Yes, sah, but jes' now day laid me ober on me back! Ugh! I was feared I was a-goner. Le's go down, Marse Frank."

"Nonsense, Pomp. You have been up above the clouds too often to be getting scared now."

"Marse Frank, I ain't no bird, an' I don't wanter be, neider, an' ef— Hole on dar-dar—I tole yer," and another gust of wind twisted him about till the kinks of his wool were almost straightened out. "Marse Frank—fo' God's sake lemme go down!"

Barney and Harry were some distance off, having the same trouble that Pomp had. But neither one gave vent to their fears as he did.

They braced themselves to the task of watching the fitful moods of the wind, and steered as near as they could in accordance with them.

"Keep cool, Pomp," said Frank, soothingly. "You'll soon get the hang of it, and fly as easily as I do. The wind blows a little stiff, that's all."

"Dere's a slycone er comin'," said Pomp.

"Why, there isn't a cloud in sight. It's nothing but a stiff breeze. Brace up, old man, brace up."

"Dere ain't no chance ter brace up, Marse Frank," said the ducky, now thoroughly demoralized. "Ef I brokes my neck it will be youse fault."

"Of course it will. I'd get drunk for a week if you were to fall and break your neck. So don't do it, old man."

Just then a shriek burst from Harry, who was some distance away with Barney. Frank turned and looked in that direction, and was horrified at seeing him tumbling toward the earth in a confused mass of wings.

A wild cry of alarm burst from Frank, Sr., and Pomp and Barney.

Both the Reads darted toward him with all the speed they could command.

Down, down, down they dived after the falling man, and wild shrieks came up from Harry of:

"Save me! oh, save me!"

Swift as eagles Frank and his father shot downward in the hope of saving him; but ere they reached him he crashed into the topmost branches of an immense cottonwood tree.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUNG HARRY REFUSES TO FLY.

It was a terrible scene to look upon.

Certain death seemed to stare Harry Bursleigh in the face.

He gave up hope just before he crashed into the tree-top, and an involuntary prayer escaped him.

The crash seemed to be as loud as the ocean's roar in a storm for a moment—to him at least.

As he struck the tree, Frank, Sr., exclaimed:

"My God! I fear he is killed!"

"It's terrible!" said Frank, Jr.

They both passed over the tree-top to avoid coming in contact with it. But ere they had gone fifty yards beyond it they turned, expecting to find Harry either dead, or dying on the ground under the tree.

But they were not to find him there. On the contrary, they found him lodged up in the topmost branches of the tree. The wings had caught on both sides of him, and held him securely.

"Are you hurt much, Harry?" Frank asked, as he circled around the tree.

"No. I don't think I am," he replied, "only I was nearly scared to death."

"Thank God!" fervently ejaculated both father and son.

"I'm afraid the flying machine is ruined, though," said Harry.

"Oh, I don't mind that as long as you escaped alive," remarked Frank. "I was afraid you would be killed. I think I was as badly frightened as you were. How did it happen?"

"I don't know. A sudden gust of wind struck me and I grabbed the handles to move the wings so as to meet it properly. I must have caught hold of the wrong handles, as the moment I touched them I found that something was wrong and that I was falling. I lost my presence of mind and cried out for help."

"And you are sure you are not hurt?"

"Quite sure. I don't think the limbs of the tree even scratched me anywhere. The wings lodged on the tree and held me up."

"Well, you are lucky."

"I don't think so. I am unlucky. How shall I get out of this?"

"I don't see any other way than to climb down the same as if you had no wings. Are you a good hand at climbing?"

"I used to be when a school-bey. I guess I can get down."

"Well, you had better unbuckle yourself and climb down. We'll try to get the machine out and repair damages."

Harry began to disengage himself from the machine, while Frank looked around for Barney and Pomp.

To his surprise, he found that both of them were down on the ground walking about.

"Ten miles or more."
 "Which way is he going?"
 "With the wind, of course. But I can't tell at that distance."
 "Let's go over and see who he is," suggested Frank.

"Good. We'll race for it."
 All four started at full speed.
 The great wings flopped with such force as to send them forward at great speed.

"Rise higher and try a dead sail!" cried Frank to Barney and Pomp. They obeyed, and began to ascend with him and Mr. Reade.

When they were at an elevation of some two miles or so, they spread out their great wings and sailed toward the balloon with the speed of arrows.

The man in the balloon saw them coming. He did not know what they were, and, when convinced that they were making for him direct, he began to let out the gas in the great balloon, in order that he might quickly settle down to earth again.

On rushed the winged men, almost whistling through the air.

They heard the aeronaut's yell of terror. He drew a revolver and began firing at Frank, who was foremost.

"Thunder!" ejaculated Frank, as he heard the shot. "That won't do! Hold up, stranger, we are friends!"

Crack, crack, crack! went the aeronaut's revolver, and the bullets began to be heard by our heroes.

Frank and his father quickly flapped upward again to get out of the way of the flying bullets, and Pomp quickly followed them.

Not so did Barney.
 In the confusion at being shot at he reached for his revolver instead of changing the course of his flight.

The weapon became fastened in its place some way, and he continued at a headlong speed.

Suddenly a wild, despairing yell burst from the aeronaut, two sharp reports of his revolver, and the next moment Barney crashed headforemost against the immense balloon, more than a mile above the surface of the earth.

CHAPTER X.

BARNEY AND THE BALLOON.

WORDS utterly fail to describe the terribly dramatic scene of the collision in mid-air.

The immense balloon seemed even more formidable than the great wings of the flying machines.

Both were so much larger than anything ever before seen in the air that the accident appeared appalling.

Then, too, the wild yells of alarm that burst simultaneously from Barney and the aeronaut, and echoed by Pomp, made it appear more like a battle between giants of the air.

The great balloon reared and swayed under the collision.

The aeronaut yelled and danced around frantically in his car, flourishing his revolver over his head—having emptied every chamber at Barney.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Reade, "that Irishman has run into the balloon!"

"Yes," said Frank, "he is always getting into trouble of some kind."

They turned as quickly as they could, only to find Barney clinging to the corded netting of the balloon with both hands.

His wings remained spread out at full length, just as when he struck the balloon. His speed having been stopped, he was a dead weight.

"Let go!" cried Frank, "and flop your wings as you fall!"

"Oh, wirra—wirra!" moaned Barney. "It's a dead man I am!"

"Let go and use your wings!" cried Frank again.

"Sure, and av I did it's kilt I'd be," said Barney.

"In the name of heaven!" cried the aeronaut, "who are you?"

"I am Frank Reade, Jr.," replied Frank.

"Keep cool and you'll be all right."

"Get that fool off my balloon! I am falling fast!"

"Barney, let go, or I'll have to shoot you to save the professor," said Frank to the Irishman.

"The saints presarve us!" groaned Barney, and then he let go.

He shot down past the car like a rocket, and a yell of terror burst from his lips.

But in another moment the wings became inflated and buoyed him up as before.

"Use your wings, you fool!" cried Frank, keeping as near to him as he could.

Barney had the presence of mind to do as he

was told, and in another moment had the wings under complete control.

He flopped them rapidly, and soon rose above the balloon.

Seeing him once more safe, our hero turned his attention to the aeronaut.

The balloon had drifted eastward with the wind, and was nearly a mile away. But Frank and his father determined to make the man's acquaintance.

Telling Barney and Pomp to follow, they put out after the balloon. In a few minutes they had overtaken it, but the aeronaut had loaded up his revolver, and cried out:

"Keep off! keep off, or I'll fire!"

"Certainly," replied Frank. "I only wish to apologize for the awkwardness of my servant in running into you. I regret it very much, and would be pleased if you would allow me to pay for any damage he may have done you."

"I don't know that he has done any damage, except to scare me almost to death," was the reply.

"Who are you and where do you hail from?"

"I am Professor Scanett, of St. Louis."

"Ah! I've heard of you, professor! This is my father—Frank Reade, Sr."

The two men acknowledged the introduction, and then Frank asked:

"Where are you going, professor?"

"I started to go to across to San Francisco, but am discouraged. I am going back."

"Indeed! Why do you give it up?"

"Because the wind is against me pretty much all the time. It would take me a month to get across; then I might meet a storm and go down in the midst of the desert, or a thousand other things. I see you have mastered the theory of aerial navigation."

"Yes. I think I have; but it has its dangers as well as yours."

"Of course. But yours eclipses anything yet gotten up. I would like to go down and make a thorough examination of your machine, but it costs too much time and labor to inflate again."

"I'll be in St. Louis when I return from San Francisco, and you can then do so," said Frank.

"Thanks. I shall look for you with a great deal of interest. By the way—I hope I did not hit your man when I shot at him."

"No. I don't think you did, as he did not say anything about it," replied Frank, laughing. "He is a pretty big bird for a man to shoot at and miss, though."

"Yes. I am a very poor shot, and am glad of it, too."

"So am I," and all three of them laughed heartily.

"Well, we must go the other way," remarked Frank, finally. "So we bid you good-bye, and wish you a prosperous voyage."

"Good-bye—and good luck to both of you," said the professor, standing up in his car and waving his handkerchief toward them.

Frank and his father turned and flew back toward Barney and Pomp, whom they rejoined after going a mile or so.

"Were you hit, Barney?" Frank asked, as soon as he joined the other two.

"Sure, an' the blaggard couldn't hit a house," replied Barney.

"I believe you," said Mr. Reade, laughing. "He was too scared to hit even his own balloon."

"Barney wasn't," said Frank. "He butted it like an old ram."

"An' wid his head, too," remarked Pomp, grinning from ear to ear.

"Sure, an' would yez have me kick it wid me feet?"

"Why didn't you seize and fly away with it?" Frank asked.

"Bedad, an' didn't yez hear 'im squaler?"

"Oh, yes!" and Frank and his father laughed till their sides ached.

It was now near sundown, and our hero began casting about for a suitable place to land and camp for the night.

"We could keep up on the wing all night," said Frank, "if it was necessary to do so. But as we are in no hurry, we may as well seek a good camping-place."

"Yes, or else follow the railroad and put up at some village."

"Oh! in that case the villagers would bother us to death with their insatiable curiosity," said Frank. "I'd much rather camp out in the woods and cook my own meals."

"I guess you are right. We'll look for a good place. We haven't crossed a stream for many miles. We ought to strike one soon."

"There are not very many streams in this section," remarked Frank. "We may not be able to find one in time to secure any game and make a camp too."

"Oh, we must take game wherever we find

it, and— Ah! There's a stream off yonder," and Mr. Reade pointed to a heavy fringe of timber running southward away off on the left.

"Yes, I think so," said Frank. "We can soon find out," and they flew in that direction.

In a half hour they came in sight of water. It was a river.

"I guess we can have water enough here," Mr. Reade remarked.

"Yes—plenty—and fish, too."

They settled down near the banks of the stream, and lost no time in establishing a camp.

While Barney and Pomp were stretching the tent and making the fire, Frank and his father got out their fishing tackle and went about hunting for bait. They soon unearthed some grubs, and a few minutes later cast their hooks into the water.

Both stood still awhile, anxiously waiting for a bite.

"Not much of a stream for fish, I guess," remarked Frank.

Mr. Reade made a jerk with his line, which was attached to a wooden pole he had cut in the bushes, and hooked a fish that seemed disposed to pull him into the water.

"What is it, father?" Frank asked.

"Hanged if I know. He is as strong as a mule. I am afraid the hook is not strong enough to hold him."

The fish ran up stream and down, and then darted out into the middle as far as the line would let him go.

"Play him till he tires out," suggested Frank, looking eagerly on at the exciting contest.

After playing the fish for some ten minutes or more, Mr. Reade said:

"I don't think we can get him," he said, the perspiration pouring down his face. "He is too heavy and strong. He'll break the hook or line. There! just look at him. He is a cat-fish."

The fish came to the surface in his struggle to shake himself loose from the hook. He was easily recognized.

"By George!" exclaimed Frank, greatly excited. "That's the biggest cat-fish I ever saw. Get him up to the surface again and let me give him a bullet. That'll make him weaken."

The fish made a dive and carried the end of the pole deep down in the water. But by skillful management he was drawn to the surface again, when Frank gave him a bullet just back of his gills.

He made a frantic rush for the bottom, almost pulling the fisherman into the river.

The bullet had gone to a vital part, and in a minute or two he began to weaken.

"He is weakening," said Mr. Reade. "I can feel him giving up."

"Bring him up again and let me have another shot at him," Frank suggested, and Mr. Reade began to pull him in.

He came up and received another ball, this time between the eyes. He seemed utterly stunned, and lay helpless and limp.

"Now is the time to land him."

Drawing him up to the bank, Frank seized him by the gills and drew him out on the grass. He was still quivering in the agonies of death.

"He's a whopper!" exclaimed Mr. Reade, admiring the magnificent fish.

"I guess he'd tip the scales at fifty pounds," remarked Frank.

"I am sorry we haven't anything to weigh him with."

"So am I. It's the biggest fish I ever caught."

"I guess we've enough for supper and breakfast too," said Frank, laughing.

"I should say so," replied his father, rolling up his line. "I'll wait till morning and try my luck again."

They returned to the camp-fire without the fish. Pomp looked up inquiringly as they returned empty-handed.

"Whar's dem fish, Marse Frank?" he asked.

"We won't have any fish to-night, Pomp," replied Frank. "We'll try a few whale-steaks."

"Whale-steaks! Whar's de whale?"

"Out there on the grass—the same one that swallowed Jonah."

Pomp and Barney ran forward to see what it was.

"De lor' gorrarnighty!" exclaimed Pomp, when he caught sight of the fish. "Dat am er whopper ef it ain't no whale!"

"Bedad, it's right ye are," assented Barney.

Pomp dressed the fish and hung it upon a tree near by, throwing the refuse into the river. Then he cut off several large steaks and returned to the camp-fire. In a little while he had hot coffee and hot cat-fish steaks ready for supper.

CHAPTER XI.

FISHING EXTRAORDINARY—BARNEY'S SCRAPE.

THE supper was a delicious one, and they had the appetites that enabled them to appreciate it.

"I say, father," said Frank, as they reclined on the grass and smoked their pipes, "I'd be willing to lie around here a week to catch such a fish as that."

"It would be worth the trouble. I feel the excitement of his vigorous pull yet. Once, a good many years ago—long before you were born—Barney hooked one in White river much larger than this one."

"The deuce!"

"Yes; and the fish pulled him into the water, and would have drowned him, if a couple of us had not gone to his assistance."

"Why didn't he let go of the pole?"

"Because he was game, and did not know as much then as he does now."

"But I got the fish, begorra!" remarked Barney, who had been listening to the conversation between Frank and his father.

"I don't know about that, Barney," said Mr. Reade. "When we went to your assistance the fish seemed to be having the best of you. I think if we had left you to fight it out alone he would have made fish-bait of you."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Pomp. "Fish-bait!" That chuckling laugh of Pomp's never failed to rile the Irishman.

He turned and glared at Pomp, as if half inclined to annihilate him.

"Bedad," he exclaimed, "the naygur wud be ather laving go the pole. Sure an' it's meself as niver gives up til a fish—nor a naygur!"

"Come now," said Frank, warningly, "none of that! No quarreling. We'll all try our luck at fishing to-morrow."

They both hushed talking, and went to work to do justice to the meal. The fish-steaks were delicious, for they were as fresh as it was possible to have them.

Pipes followed the steaks, and an evening of supreme comfort was passed, after which they rolled in their blankets, and slept till daylight the sweet sleep of those who deserve it.

All four were up betimes, and preparing to try their luck at fishing in the river. Pomp prepared a delicious breakfast while Barney was hunting for bait.

Just as the sun began to peep over the horizon, all four men were on the banks of the river, casting their lines into its limpid waters.

Pomp was the first to catch a fish—a large perch, weighing about two pounds.

"Golly!" he exclaimed, "dat am good luck, suah!"

Just then Barney got a bite.

He jerked hard, and found that he had something larger and more pugnacious than a perch on his hook. It pulled with a two-horse power, and so did Barney.

"Pull, Barney!" cried Pomp, as much excited as the Irishman was. "Doan left 'im go! Dat's er whale."

"Whoa!" cried Barney, bracing himself so as not to be drawn into the water. "Be aisy now, me hearty! Sure, an' would ye be ather refusin' to come out av the wather? Whoa! Bedad, but it's the ould Nick I have on—me—hook!"

By a desperate exertion he managed to get the fish to the shore, and there it was discovered that it was an enormous eel.

"Hi, Barney! that's er eel. De best fish in de ribber."

All negroes are fond of eels, and Irishmen, too, as for that.

They got him out at last.

He was larger than Barney's arm, and nearly five feet long.

They have immense strength in the water, and out of it are the hardest of all fish to hold.

He squirmed and wriggled on the grass like a snake, and at one time both Barney and Pomp thought he had freed himself from the hook. To save him they sprang forward and grabbed him with their hands. But they found him as "slik as an eel," gliding through their hands like wet soap.

"Hol' 'im, Barney!" yelled Pomp, grabbing here and there with frantic energy.

"Hould 'im yerself! Sure the devil is in 'im! Murder! Mur—"

The active eel glided through their hands and made a coil round Barney's neck, giving him a squeeze that cut off his breath as effectually and promptly as ever a hangman's noose did for a criminal.

Barney's tongue protruded three or four inches, and his eyes came out and stood on his cheeks, whilst his face began to change to a darker hue.

Barney made a desperate effort to free himself; but the fish was too slippery for him to get a hold on it.

Down he fell in the agonies of suffocation, and Pomp yelled out at the top of his lungs:

"Marse Frank! Marse Frank!"

Frank dropped his pole and ran forward

knowing from Pomp's tones that something had happened.

He found Barney rolling on the ground, and Pomp trying to hold the eel, which had quickly released its coil round the Irishman's neck.

"What's the matter with Barney?" he asked.

"Fore de Lor," Marse Frank!" cried Pomp, still struggling with the eel. "Dis hyer eel done gone an' killed 'im, I reckon."

Frank seized the pole and elevated it in the air so as to see if the eel was still fastened to the hook. He found that he was still fast, and said:

"Why don't you kill the eel instead of wrestling with it that way? What's the matter with you, anyway? You are off your nut, Pomp."

Pomp secured a stout stick, and began belaboring the eel with it. In a minute or two the fish was quiet, and Pomp stood over him with his hands full of the slime from its serpentine body.

"You and Barney are about the biggest fools I know of," remarked Frank, as he dropped the pole and started to return to his own hook.

Barney arose and staggered toward the camp, as sick of fishing as ever any man was. He did not care two cents' worth for all the fish in the river after that episode.

The eel had given him a grip that came near breaking his neck. They have very great constrictive strength, and had anything pulled on the hook at the time, the fish would have undoubtedly have choked him to death.

When hooked they have been known to coil round a root or stone in the water and successfully defy the fisherman to pull him out. If the root, or stone, holds firm the eel generally whips the fight.

"What was the matter over there?" Mr. Reade asked, as Frank returned to his hook.

"Barney caught a big eel," was the reply, "and it came near being too much for both him and Pomp."

Mr. Reade laughed.

"They are pretty hard to handle sometimes," he said; "and yet I've seen Pomp rub sand on his hands and hold the largest eels I ever saw."

"Well, there isn't any sand round here for any one to use, and so the eel had a circus with them. In the struggle it got its tail around Barney's neck and gave him a hug that made him sick."

Mr. Reade started on hearing that.

"Frank," he said, "an eel has a grip that lays way over the masons. Barney is hurt, you may depend on it. I'll go and see him."

He found Barney lying down on his blanket, looking ill and pale.

"How is it, Barney?" he asked.

"Bedad, it's hung I am, loike a murderer. The thafe av a fish shlipped his noose over me hid an' choked me loike the blaggard he is."

"Let me see if your neck is broken."

Barney rose to a sitting posture and suffered Mr. Reade to make a thorough examination of his neck and throat.

"Oh, you are all right, but you don't want to use a live eel for a cravat any more."

Barney was not in the humor to enjoy the joke. He lay down on the blanket again and remained there till high noon, by which time the others had caught several hundred pounds of fish.

None of them, however, caught one as large as the big cat-fish secured the night before.

The dinner-hour found him able to get square with the eel, for he ate a chunk of him with great relish.

"You had rather have him in your stomach than around your neck, eh, Barney?" said Frank.

"Yis, sorr, bad cess to 'im."

"So would I. How did you come to get him there?"

"Bedad, he got me there!"

"So he did. Well, you want to be careful how you handle a live eel next time."

"Yes," added Mr. Reade, "you want to get him in the frying-pan before you take liberties with him."

"Dat was de wustest eel I eber seck in my life!" said Pomp. "He, he, he! He licked Barney in er fair fight."

"Bedad, an' that's more than a naygur can do!" retorted Barney, his eyes flashing.

He could not stand that chuckle of Pomp's, particularly when the laugh was on him, as it was in this instance.

"Peace!" said Frank, sternly.

And there was peace.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ELECTRIC EEL.

AFTER dinner and a good smoke the four men went back to the river to continue the sport of fishing.

They had determined to make a day of it, as they did not expect ever to find such good fishing-ground again.

In order to prevent a quarrel between Barney and Pomp, on account of the latter's taunting chuckles over the eel scrape, Frank placed himself between them.

They had been fishing about an hour, when Pomp caught an eel. It was not half as large as the one Barney had captured.

It was a queer-looking eel, and easily seen to belong to another species.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pomp, "dis am anoder kind er eel!"

The eel wriggled as other eels do, and Pomp had some difficulty about getting it off the hook.

At last he seized hold of it with his right hand, and the next moment let out a yell that awoke the echoes for miles around.

"What in thunder is the matter with you, Pomp?" Frank asked.

"De Lor' sabe us!" gasped Pomp. "Somebody hit me all ober!"

"Why, you must be crazy, Pomp! Nobody hit you."

"Marse Frank," persisted Pomp, "I tought de lightnin' struck me."

"Pomp, you are off your base. Go pour some cold water on your head. It may do you good."

Pomp shook his head and felt of his arms and shoulders, as if to see if they were all there.

Barney laughed and remarked:

"Bedad, but the naygur is woid wid his big crop av wool."

"Oh, go ketch er eel," retorted Pomp.

"Faith, av I do it's a big wan I'd catch," returned Barney.

Pomp stooped and picked up his eel again.

The moment he touched it with both hands he yelled like a Comanche Indian, dropped it and staggered away from it like a drunken man, and perfectly wild with terror.

"Oh, Lor'! Oh, Lor' gorrarnighty!" he groaned and cried. "Dat eel am de debbil! It am bewitched!"

Barney roared with laughter and ran to pick up his fish, so as to have the laugh on Pomp.

But no sooner had he touched it than he yelled bloody murder and dropped it.

"Bad cess to it!" he growled.

"What's the matter with it?" Frank asked, his curiosity greatly excited.

Then he picked it up in one hand and looked at it.

Suddenly he had occasion to use both hands, and then he received an electric shock that staggered him.

"By George!" he exclaimed, dropping the fish like a hot potato. "It's an electric eel, as I live."

"Eh! What?" and Mr. Reade ran forward to get a look at the fish.

"An electric eel," said Frank, "and he came near knocking me off my feet. I didn't know they were so high up as this latitude."

Mr. Reade pronounced the fish a *gymnotus*, similar to those found in South America.

"It's a rare specimen for this latitude," he said. "I wish I could preserve it alive to get it home. But that is impossible."

"Take it up and test its power, father," Frank suggested.

"Thank you, my boy," replied Mr. Reade, shaking his head. "I'll take your word for it without entertaining any doubt whatever."

"Barney is even with Pomp now," remarked Frank, laughing.

"Yes, and with you, too, I guess," said Mr. Reade, "as all three of you got a shock."

"Oh, I don't mind a thing like that. You didn't hear me yell, did you?"

"No. Pomp and Barney did that for you."

After a great deal of fun over the electric eel they went back to their lines. Pomp, however, could not get over the shock. He had never heard of an electric fish before, and it was a hard nut for him to crack.

That night they feasted again on fish, and smoked their pipes with the satisfaction of successful fishermen.

The next morning they were up with the sun, and preparing to mount on the wing. The tents were struck and everything in readiness, when Frank gave the word to start.

The rise was beautifully made, and the day promised to be a very fine one for such traveling.

About noon they came in sight of a herd of buffalo grazing peacefully along the margin of a river.

"Let's give 'em a scare," suggested Frank, "by flying low and yelling at them."

"Good!" said his father.

He gave the order, and the descent was made.

When in about fifty feet of the ground they gave a series of yells and flew directly toward the herd.

A bellowing sound escaped the herd—not less

than ten thousand, perhaps—and the noise was like the roar of the ocean in a storm.

They stampeded in a panic of terror, rushing toward the river like an avalanche.

On that side, between them and the river, were a dozen Indians, disguised in the skins of buffalo, who had been following them silently and stealthily, killing many without alarming the others.

The rushing herd swept over them like a flood, and their cries of agony were lost in the din and roar of the stampede.

CHAPTER XIII

POMP'S ADVENTURE.

FRANK READE, JR., was the only one of the party who saw the redskins. But he did not get sight of them until the panic began, when they, seeing their peril, threw off the skins and made frantic efforts to save themselves.

One of them sprang upon the back of a terror-stricken bison and clung for dear life to his shaggy mane.

Then it was that Mr. Reade, Barney and Pomp caught sight of him.

They all yelled at the top of their lungs, calling each other's attention to the savage, but none could hear.

The herd swept toward the river, and plunged in like a flood.

Instantly the river began to swell and overflow its banks.

The mighty host of shaggy, dark-brown brutes rushed madly over each other, only to become entangled in a hopeless mass in the rising waters.

"My God!" exclaimed Frank, "this is awful. I did not anticipate any such thing as this. It is a wanton destruction of a noble beast, for which there is no excuse. But it can't be stopped. Good heavens! more than half will be drowned! Their bodies are choking up the river now."

Many of the bison separated from the herd, and swam off, so as to be out of the way of the rush, and thus escaped destruction. In their frantic terror they trampled over each other, and thus caused many hundreds to drown that otherwise would have gotten safely over.

"Frank," said Mr. Reade, "this is simply awful. I never saw anything like it in all my travels."

"Neither did I. Did you see those Indians who were stalking the herd?"

"I saw one Indian on the back of a buffalo after the stampede commenced. Were there any more?"

"Yes—a dozen at least."

"Indeed! Then we haven't done so bad after all."

"No," and Frank looked at the hundreds of carcasses that were floating away on the current of the river. "Though I suppose the Indian has as much right to live as we have."

"No doubt of that. But they don't seem to think that anybody else but themselves have any such right, though."

"That is true, and it's why I have but little sympathy for the race. The only really good Indian I ever saw was dead."

"Yes, and that is the only way to make 'em good. They have imbibed a bitter hatred of the white race with their mother's milk, and that can never be eradicated."

"They have had good reason for hating the whites," remarked Frank, "but that is no reason why they should attack innocent parties as they do. They will never be any better than they are."

"By and by they will become extinct, and so known in history as such. There must have been at least 10,000 buffaloes in that herd, and fully half were drowned. The river is full of them."

Frank again swept his eyes over the river, and for miles below its bosom was dotted with the black carcasses.

"If they lodge anywhere," he said, "the stench will be simply awful."

"Yes. It's lucky that no cities are on that river."

"The fish will have a feast, though."

"Yes, indeed. What a surprised set of Indians those stalkers were!"

"I should say so. Did you see what became of that fellow we saw on the back of the buffalo?"

"Yes. I kept my eye on him till I saw him go down in the water with his beast. He was overwhelmed in the middle of the river."

"He ought to have changed to the back of another. I should liked to have seen him escape."

"Yes, with such an experience as that, he would have something to talk about the rest of his life."

By this time they had flown far over the river,

and were even beyond those of the herd that had crossed safely in the stampede.

Away on the right several small specks were seen moving across the plains. Mr. Reade used his field glass and found that they were a party of men on horseback.

"But whether they are whites or redskins I am unable to make out," he said.

"Let's go over that way and find out," suggested Frank.

"That is the best way," and so they changed their course in that direction.

In a half hour or so they were enabled to make them out.

"They are Indians," said Mr. Reade; "about two dozen of them."

"War party?"

"Oh, no—hunters."

The Indians soon caught sight of the winged monsters in the air, and naturally came to a halt. Nearer and nearer the men on wings approached, and the Indians began to worry.

By and by they turned their horses' heads and made off at full speed, scattering in every direction, as if fearing to remain together and thus tempt the unknown monsters of the air.

"There's no use wasting time on them," said Mr. Reade. "We had better keep on West. I think we are going to have trouble before night."

"What kind of trouble?" Frank asked.

"A storm. Do you see that little cloud out there in the southwest?"

"Yes, but it doesn't look any-way dangerous."

"Not now, but wait a couple of hours and see what it looks like then."

Two hours later Frank remarked to his father: "I guess you are right; we are going to have a storm. We had better seek shelter somewhere."

"We shall have over an hour in which to find shelter. There's a piece of timber ahead of us."

"We'll stop there, then."

They made for the timber with good speed.

Pomp declared that a "slycone" was coming, and wanted to get down and walk the last three miles to the timber.

"Keep up your flight," said Frank. "You can reach it in a few minutes more."

"But dis heah wind is ergin us, Marse Frank," Pomp replied. "It's er gwine ter broke somebody's neck ef dey don't stop dis heah foolishness."

"Birds never break their necks on the wing," said Frank.

"I ain't no bird," said Pomp, shaking his head dubiously.

"You are as good as one. All you want is a bill and tail. You have the wings."

Just then a gust of wind gave him a twist that made his wool stand up.

"Jes lookee heah!" he cried, desperately struggling to adjust himself to the situation.

"Oh, you are doing fine. Come on!"

They were within a mile of the timber, and Frank shoved ahead to select a place for a camp.

Mr. Reade and Barney followed him closely, leaving Pomp behind.

Another gust of wind nearly upset him, and that decided him to make a descent then and there.

He accordingly dived toward the earth like a hawk, and in a couple of minutes was on the ground.

"Golly!" he exclaimed, as he closed his wings.

"Ise gwine fo' ter walk dere. I ain't done much walkin' since I lef' home," and he started out toward the timber as fast as he could walk through the tall grass, which at that season of the year was nearly three feet high.

Of course he could make but slow progress in such grass as that. But he preferred that to the danger of meeting a "slycone" up in the air.

He kept his eye on the others as they descended at the edge of the timber, and thought he had the direction all right.

Five minutes after he saw the others descend the storm burst upon him with terrific fury.

If the wind was fierce the rain was simply terrific.

It pelted him with merciless fury, drenching him to the skin and blinding him completely in its copiousness.

"De lor' gorrarmighty!" he exclaimed, as he pulled his hat down over his eyes and pressed forward. "Dis am de wust yit!"

A gust of wind came which keeled him over on his back on the grass. The flying machine being fastened to him prevented the free use of his limbs, and so the wind got the gauge on him, rolling him over and over like a log.

In vain did he grasp handfuls of grass in the hope of being able to hold on and regain his feet. The grips tore loose, and then the fierce wind would send him rolling again.

"Oh, de lor' sabe us!" he groaned. "Whar am I gwine! Marse Frank! Marse Frank! Barney!"

Of course nobody could hear him.

The fierce wind roared and shrieked over him like a demon, drowning his voice and ducking him now and then in little pools of water that were rapidly forming in every direction.

How it blew!

How the pitiless rain pelted him!

Suddenly he caught a handful of grass and succeeded in keeping it. He pulled himself to his feet and looked around.

He could not see fifty yards away.

Another gust sent him rolling again, and he went rolling away with a despairing cry on his lips.

CHAPTER XIV.

POMP IS FOUND AFTER THE STORM.

HURRYING forward to reach the timber ere the storm should burst upon them, Frank and his father did not notice that Pomp was not with Barney behind them. They were both under the impression that he was making all possible haste with themselves. Even Barney thought he was bringing up the rear.

Judge of their amazement when they alighted in the edge of the timber and found that Pomp was not even in sight.

"Why, where is Pomp?" Frank exclaimed, on looking around.

"Yes—where is he?" echoed Mr. Reade.

"Faith, an' it's meself as doesn't know at all, at all," replied Barney.

"That's strange," muttered Frank. "He surely didn't fall, or we should have heard his yell."

"Yes. I don't understand it," Mr. Reade remarked. "Something has happened. He is not in sight."

"Something wrong," said Frank, shaking his head. "But we can't do anything. Here comes the storm. Get under the trees."

They made a rush for the shelter of the trees, which gave a promise of some protection from the fury of the storm.

The wind howled and shrieked through the timber, and the rain came down in torrents. But the heavy foliage ward off much of it. Yet they soon became drenched to the skin, for the water came down in floods.

The storm lasted but a short half hour, during which time an immense quantity of water fell. The level prairie land was several inches under water in the deep grass, with no drainage for its escape.

The wind died away, the clouds dispersed, and the sun came out warm and glowing. Birds twittered in the branches overhead, and all nature seemed to rejoice over the immense fall of rain.

But where was poor Pomp?

Frank was more uneasy than ever before in his regard.

"Father," he said, as soon as the sun came out, "I can't wait any longer. I am going to look for Pomp. Something has happened to him."

"Shall I go with you?"

"I don't think it necessary. He was with us a mile back."

"Well, I'll wait for you here."

Frank immediately spread his wings and rose in the air several hundred feet. He carried the field glass with him.

Ere he was up two minutes, he espied Pomp trudging along in the matted, tangled grass.

"There he is," he exclaimed, loud enough for his father to hear him. "Nearly a mile away, walking in the grass."

"He is all right, then?"

"He seems to be."

Frank then flew over to where Pomp was struggling through the grass. The rain and wind had beaten it down and twisted it about in hillocks in every direction, rendering it extremely difficult for any one to walk through it.

"What's the matter with you?" Frank asked Pomp when he reached a point directly over him.

"De wind blowed me away, Marse Frank," he replied.

"The wind blowed fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Frank. "Why didn't it blow us away?"

"Cause it didn't catch yer."

"That won't do, Pomp. Are you hurt?"

"No, sah."

"Is the machine broken?"

"Doan know, sah."

"Why in thunder don't you fly, then?"

"Ise too wet, sah."

"Too wet! What difference does that make?"

He didn't know. He had had such a drenching that it had taken pretty much the same effect on him that it did on a setting hen. All the ambition was gone out of him.

"Spread your wings and get to the timber as fast as you can."

Frank was mad, and Pomp knew it from the tone of his voice.

He spread his wings and rose up like an im-

mense fowl, and followed Frank over to the timber. There Frank got the story of his adventure out of him.

"Why, you dunce," said Mr. Reade, "you were in more danger out there than we were. You have been well punished for not keeping up with us."

"Some day you'll get killed for just such foolishness," put in Frank. "As long as you see us on the wing you ought to be able to keep up too."

"Faith, an' a black birrud—"

"That'll do, Barney," said Frank, interrupting the Irishman; "you've nothing to say about it." Barney turned away, itching to get in a sarcastic comment on the "black birrud."

"You got the full benefit of the storm out there, didn't you?" Mr. Reade asked.

"Yes, sah, dat's er fac'. I nebbber seed sich rain in my life."

"Did the wind toss you about?"

"Yes, sah. It rolled me ober an' ober like a log. A nigger doan know nuffin', Marse Frank."

"Sure, an' it's a wise naygur as knows it," commented Barney.

Barney was sarcastic; but Pomp didn't know whether he was complimented or not, and so made no reply.

"Get out the tent and stretch it," said Frank, "we may as well stay here now till to-morrow morning. It's a good place to camp. Build a big fire so we can dry our clothes as soon as possible."

Barney and Pomp went to work stretching the tent and making a fire. They had a good deal of trouble in getting dry wood enough to start the fire. Frank found a dead tree that was hollow. The dry wood inside was like tinder. He touched a lighted match to it, and the blaze started up the hollow with a roar.

There was a large orifice some thirty or forty feet above the ground, which gave a draft like a tall chimney.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Reade, "that makes a fire, but doesn't do us any good."

"But it will when it falls," replied Frank, looking on at the roaring blaze.

"Which way will it fall? We may have to move lively to get out of the way of it. There's nothing more uncertain than a burning tree."

Frank and the others kept up a strict watch on the burning tree to ascertain which way it would fall. It burned nearly two hours ere it fell, and then it went in the direction of the river.

"There! There's fire enough to last all night!" exclaimed Frank. "I am going to dry my clothes the first thing."

Barney and Pomp busied themselves in making the camp comfortable, and night found them with a big burning log to dispel the gloom. They ate a hearty supper, smoked their pipes, and went to bed, prepared to sleep the sleep of good men.

But they were not to spend the night without something to disturb their slumbers. About midnight coyotes began to bark and howl around the camp. They had been attracted by something, as their numbers kept increasing until there must have been at least half a hundred yelping and howling around the camp.

"This won't do," said Frank, annoyed beyond endurance by the noise. "What in thunder ails the brutes, anyhow?"

"I guess they have been drawn hither by something of an appetizing odor," remarked his father, getting up from his blanket.

"Well, I'd like to give 'em a dose of lead to appease their appetites," said Frank.

"Call up Barney and Pomp," suggested Mr. Reade. "Maybe a volley will drive them away."

When Frank went to Barney and Pomp's tent he found them sleeping soundly as though no howling coyotes were in a thousand miles of them.

"I won't disturb 'em," he said, turning away, revolver in hand.

By the aid of the light of the burning log he was able to see the reflection of their eyes in the darkness beyond. Selecting a pair nearest to him, he took deliberate aim and fired.

A howl of pain went up from the brute, and instantly the whole pack set out on the dead run.

In another minute not a single coyote was to be heard.

Frank went back to his blanket, and was soon soundly sleeping again.

When he awoke the next morning Pomp was cooking breakfast at the still burning log.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MURDEROUS APACHES—TWO WOMAN RESCUED FROM THEIR CLUTCHES.

"HELLO, Pomp," greeted Frank. "Did you hear any coyotes last night?"

"No, sah."

"Did you, Barney?"

"No, sorr."

"Well, you two would sleep through an earthquake. They howled around the camp so much that I had to get up and shoot at 'em to drive 'em away."

Pomp grinned.

"Dat wind an' rain kinder made me sleep, Marse Frank," he said.

"Something must have made you sleep," remarked Frank, "or you never could have stood such a racket as that. Hello! There comes some men on horseback!"

They all looked up the edge of the timber and saw a party of five men riding toward them. They were white men, and were armed with rifles.

"Hello, strangers!" greeted the foremost of the horsemen, as he rode up near the camp. "You want to put out that fire purty quick."

"What for?" Frank asked.

"Redskins on the rampage above here. The smoke will bring 'em down on you. We've had to get out and run for it."

"Why don't you fight 'em?"

"They are ten to one, stranger, and we want a chance."

"Big war party?"

"Yes, two of 'em."

"How far from here?"

"Bout ten miles, I reckon."

"Coming this way?"

"Don't know. That smoke 'll fetch 'em, though, if you don't put it out."

"Well, I won't put it out. On the contrary, I'll make as much smoke as I can. Barney, put a lot of green grass on the fire up there near the stump."

"Yis, sor," and Barney went to work to do as he was told.

The five men on horseback seemed to be amazed.

They could not understand the situation at all. Here were four men on foot, apparently hundreds of miles beyond the border, with no rifles, so far as they could see, and yet recklessly drawing a war-party of Apaches down on them.

"Have you had any breakfast, gentleman?" Mr. Reade asked.

"No," replied the leader. "We have not had time to eat."

"Better get down and take a bite with us, then."

"Haven't time. The reds 'll be down on you in less'n two hours, stranger."

"We are not afraid of them," said Mr. Reade.

"They are too many for you."

"I guess not."

The men rode away under the impression that four fools were doomed to lose their hair ere the sun went down that day.

But our heroes ate their breakfast leisurely, smoked their pipes, and then prepared to strike camp and go in quest of the redskins.

"I think we can have some fun with 'em, father," said Frank.

"Yes, we may be able to scatter them to the four winds and be the means of making them go home again."

Everything being in readiness, they rose on the wing.

The morning was a lovely one, clear, beautiful and still.

When at an elevation of about a quarter of a mile Mr. Reade discovered the band of Apaches up the river.

"They are heading for our column of smoke, too," he said.

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes—quite sure."

"Then we may as well give 'em a good scare."

"Yes, and kill a few of them, if they are really making war on the white settlers. Ah! They have discovered us!"

"Push forward, then, and let's give up a day to teach 'em a lesson."

They soon came up near enough to see with the naked eye that the redskins were greatly excited.

"They are getting demoralized," said Frank, as he noticed the uneasiness of the warriors.

"Ah! They have two or three white women captive!" exclaimed Mr. Reade.

"Is that so? Let's dive toward the rascals and give 'em a volley."

"Yes—and give a yell also to set 'em on a run."

"Here we go!"

Barney and Pomp nearly split their throats when they yelled.

The savages, hearing such yells from winged creatures larger than anything that they had ever seen fly before, scattered in every direction, utterly terror-stricken.

The captives were carried off by a party of five Indians.

"I'll look after them," said Mr. Reade. "Knock over as many as you can!"

With whoops and yells Barney and Pomp swooped down on another small party, and opened fire on them with their revolvers.

Never were redskins so utterly demoralized before. They yelled their terror, thinking the winged messengers of the Great Spirit were come to destroy them.

Barney chased three, shot two, and concluded to have some fun with a third one.

He flew low enough to grasp his hair and give it a wrench that made him think his scalp-lock was gone.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, seizing his knife and cutting out a piece of the redskin's scalp. "Take that, ye blaggard, an' be off wid yez."

The scalped savage urged his horse to his full speed.

Barney then chased two more, and knocked them to the earth with well-directed shots from his revolver.

Pomp succeeded in downing two of the villainous wretches.

Frank did fearful execution, emptying both his revolvers into the fleeing savages.

Mr. Reade pushed on after the party who had charge of the captive women. They urged their horses forward with all the speed they could command, but could not escape the winged Nemesis.

"Be of good cheer, ladies," cried Mr. Reade; "you shall soon be free."

Then he began shooting.

The savages were shot in the back, one by one, till the last of the five fell to the ground, as dead as a smoked herring.

"Can't you stop your horses?" he called to the women, who had been tied to pack-horses to prevent their escape.

"No—no!" they cried. "Save us! oh, Heaven, save us!"

"You are saved—try to stop the horses."

The horses were now terrified at the flopping of the great wings so near above them, and plunged madly forward with the women.

At last one of them was stopped, and then the other one was secured.

The two women—apparently mother and daughter—gazed at him in awe and trembling.

"Oh, sir," exclaimed the elder, "you are sent from God to save us!" and she burst into tears of joy.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER RESCUED.

It was soon apparent to Mr. Frank Reade, Sr., that the two women regarded him as something more than mortal. He could see that the elder of the two was inspired with a feeling of awe.

"Madame," he said to her, as he alighted near by, "I am a man in the flesh. My son and I have invented flying machines, with which we are going across the continent. The Indians think we come from the Great Spirit, and get out of our way as fast as they can. My name is Frank Reade, Sr., and that young man out there is my son Frank."

"Oh, I have heard of him," said the daughter, a young girl of sixteen or seventeen summers.

"He once made a ship which sailed up in the air, didn't he?"

"Yes," said Mr. Reade. "He made two airships, in which he went wherever he wished."

"And he had a colored man and an Irishman with him?"

"Yes; Pomp and Barney. They are with him yet."

"Oh, I am so glad!" the young girl exclaimed.

"Well," said her mother, a matronly looking woman of some forty years of age, "I really did think you were a messenger from God, sent to our rescue."

"Maybe God did send us. We don't know how Providence works in this world. Men are sometimes instruments in the hands of God to do wonderful things. It may be that he inspired this invention for the sole purpose of saving you and your daughter from the terrible fate that threatened you."

"I cannot but believe it," said the mother, "and I know I feel grateful deep down in my heart."

"Tell me how you came to be in their hands."

"They came to our place yesterday and took us away, after burning the house and killing all the cattle they could not bring away."

"But your husband—what became of him?"

"Thank God he was away from home or they would have killed him."

"He is safe, then?"

"Yes, I think so."

"He will try to find you?"

"Yes, and will run into very great danger to find us."

"Your name?"

"My husband's name is Joe Bradfield."

"How far is it to your old home, do you think?"

"I think it must be some fifty or sixty miles."

"Which way?"

"Nearly north."

"Do you wish to go back there?"

"Yes, sir—though every house in the settlement was destroyed, I think."

"Were any men killed?"

"Yes—four or five men were killed, who were at home."

"What became of the women?"

"Most of them were carried off by another party, but in what direction I don't know."

"Are they Apaches?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then they have been carried to some of their villages. Please ride over to the timber there and we'll make a fire, have a dinner, and then decide what to do."

"There may be Indians in there," suggested the daughter.

"No. They have a horror of men who fly like birds. They are making for their homes as fast as their horses can carry them, to tell their squaws how the Great Spirit sent warriors on the wing to drive them from the warpath. You need not be in the least afraid. We will be with you till we can deliver you safely to your friends."

Just then Frank, Jr., came to join them.

"This is my son, Mrs. Bradfield," said Mr. Reade, introducing the famous young inventor.

Frank bowed to the ladies in his free, off-hand way, and said:

"I am very glad to greet you, ladies, since your escape from the redskins."

"And we are rejoiced to greet those we are indebted to for our fortunate escape," said Mrs. Bradfield. "But for you and your father our fate would have been worse than death itself."

"Providence must have sent us in this direction, ma'am," said Frank.

"Yes. I am sure of it."

"We had better go to the timber, Frank," suggested Mr. Reade, "and then have a dinner for the ladies and decide on what course to pursue."

"Certainly. I'll hurry on, and select a good place to stop at."

He spread his great brown wings and rose majestically in the air.

The two women looked on in profound admiration.

"It looks so like a dream," the mother said, as the young hero sailed away toward the timber but a mile away.

"Yes," assented the daughter. "I sometimes fear it really is."

"But it is not, I can assure you," remarked Mr. Reade, who had overheard their remarks.

"I am glad to be thus reassured," said Mrs. Bradfield, "for to awake and find it so would be anguish unspeakable. Come, daughter, we must hasten to the timber and not detain Mr. Reade."

They urged the two jaded ponies forward, and Mr. Reade rose on the wing, flying over them to assure them of protection.

Barney and Pomp soon joined him, and together they proceeded to the spot selected by Frank as the new camp.

Mrs. Bradfield and her daughter soon reached the spot, and Frank assisted them off the ponies.

He found that both of them had been tied to the animals to prevent their escape.

"You are free now, ladies," he said, as he stood them on their feet.

Both mother and daughter rushed into each other's arms the moment they found themselves free to do so, and wept tears of joy.

Barney and Pomp took charge of the two ponies and secured them in the timber, after which they proceeded to stretch the tent and build a fire.

As soon as the tent was up Mrs. Bradfield and her daughter were invited to take possession of it.

"You are both tired and hungry," said Mr. Reade, "and need rest and food. After a dinner you can sleep and rest till to-morrow morning, when we will guide you back to your old home, or any other place you wish to go to."

Both women then went to the river and bathed their faces, after which they came back and waited till Pomp had prepared a good meal. They ate heartily, for with their freedom their appetites returned.

Then they went into the tent and slept all the afternoon, for they had slept none the night before.

During the time the mother and daughter were asleep Barney and Pomp busied themselves in procuring fresh game for supper.

They succeeded in procuring rabbit, fish, and venison in the greatest abundance.

Mrs. Bradfield and her daughter were very

much surprised at the repast spread before them when they came out of the tent.

"Why, what a feast you have given us!" she exclaimed.

"It is only such as every hunter enjoys," remarked Mr. Reade.

"Then I should like, above all things, to be a hunter," said she, "for this feast is fit for a king."

"Or a queen," suggested Frank, passing a choice bit of broiled venison steak to the ruddy-cheeked daughter.

They all laughed heartily and fell to with glorious appetites.

"Ah! if your husband were only here to share this with you, Mrs. Bradfield," said Mr. Reade, "I should be very much happier than I am."

"So would I and my daughter," responded Mrs. Bradfield.

"Dar's some more Injuns!" cried Pomp, looking away off toward the north.

Mr. Reade sprang to his feet and leveled his field-glass in that direction.

"They are white men, not Indians," he said.

"Oh, mamma," exclaimed the daughter, "they may be our friends out in search of us."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MEETING OF HUSBAND, WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

"Oh, are you sure they are white men, Mr. Reade?" Mrs. Bradfield exclaimed.

"Yes. They are white men; I can see their beards and bronzed faces. They are coming this way, too. The smoke of our camp-fire attracts them."

"Please let me look through that glass, Mr. Reade," pleaded the young daughter.

"Why, yes, of course," and he handed her the glass.

She turned it on the approaching horsemen and held it very steadily for a moment.

Then she uttered a scream of joy.

"Oh, I see papa. Mamma, I see papa!"

The mother sprang forward and snatched the glass from her daughter's hand and leveled it toward the horsemen.

"Thank God!" she murmured, tears of joy filling her eyes. "He will soon have a heavy load lifted off his heart."

"They will come, thinking our smoke goes up from an Apache camp," said Mr. Reade. "I congratulate you on your happiness."

Mother and daughter embraced each other a dozen times in their great joy.

By and by, when the horsemen were but a half mile away, the young girl burst away from her mother and went flying across the level prairie as fast as her nimble feet could carry her, crying out at the top of her voice:

"Papa! Papa! Papa!"

She was soon seen, and the entire band, nearly a score in number, rushed forward to meet her.

When within fifty yards of her one of the men sprang off his horse and ran forward.

He caught her up in his arms and pressed her to his heart.

She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him repeatedly.

"Thank God! Thank God!" cried the mother at the little camp, who had been a witness of the meeting between father and daughter.

Frank and his father wiped tears of sympathy from their eyes.

They too had wives and children, and could imagine the joy of such a meeting.

"My child, my child!" sobbed the overjoyed father, as he pressed the girl to his heart. "Where is your mother? Tell me—quick!"

"She is back there in the camp of friends, waiting for you," replied the girl.

He did not wait to remount his horse, but seized her hand and ran toward the little camp with all the speed he could command.

They approached, and the mother uttered a glad cry and sprang toward them.

In another moment they were clasped in each other's arms.

Frank and his father silently shook hands over the meeting.

Their hearts were too full for words.

A minute or two later the entire party rode up and began to dismount.

They surrounded the little camp and eyed Frank and his father.

"Stranger, whar did yu find 'em?" one of the party asked of Mr. Reade.

"We found them out there this morning," said Mr. Reade, pointing out toward the open prairie, the scene of the rescue, "in the hands of a party of Apaches."

"How many were there of them?"

"About two dozen or more."

The settler looked hard at him for a moment. So did the others.

"How did yer get 'em away from the reds?" the old settler asked.

"We pitched into 'em, killed nearly half of 'em, and took the ladies away from 'em."

The old settler fairly gasped:

"Is that all?"

"Yes," said Mr. Reade; "wasn't that enough?"

"Yes," and the old borderman grasped his hand; "but I can't understand it. What is your name, mister?"

"My name is Frank Reade, and this young man is my son."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed one of the men who had been silent up to that moment. "Whar's yer machine! Whar's yer steam stage! I saw yer more'n twenty years ago!" and he rushed forward and caught Mr. Reade by the hand and wrung it heartily.

"Oh, that steam Tally-ho is out of fashion now," said Mr. Reade, laughing good-naturedly. "We have a much better thing now."

"What is it? Let's see it?"

"It is over there—four of them," and he pointed to the four flying machines standing under a big tree near the tent.

The whole party rushed toward them.

They had all heard of the famous inventions of the Reades, and were eager to see the latest.

But Mrs. Bradfield led her husband up to Frank, and saw them clasp hands.

"Don't say a word, Mr. Bradfield," said Frank.

"I am a husband and father myself, and know just how you feel. I am glad we found them. We did just what you would have done under the circumstances."

"Yes, yes," and the happy man pressed his hand whilst his eyes filled with tears.

"I say, Joe!" called the old settler, clapping him on the back. "Come an' see the machine," and they all made a rush for the machine.

But Mrs. Bradfield insisted on making Joe thank Frank Reade, Sr., and did not stop till she had brought them together.

"By the great bars!" exclaimed the old settlers, in the wildest amazement. "Yer don't say yer fly?"

"Yes," said Frank.

"Like er bird?"

"Yes."

"High up in the air?"

"Yes—a mile or two miles."

The old settler was nearly paralyzed. He couldn't understand it.

He looked dazed—like one in a dream, staring straight at the young inventor the while.

"Barney?" said Frank, turning round in search of the jolly Irishman.

"Yis, sorr," responded Barney, very promptly, coming forward.

"Put on your wings and run up a mile or two."

"Yis, sorr. Would yez have a bit av the sky scraped, sorr?"

"No, not this evening," said Frank, laughing. "Some other evening."

Barney was soon in the machine, and then walked out into the open prairie to have a full swing. He touched the handles that set the wings in motion, and the great brown wings spread out nearly thirty feet from tip to tip.

Exclamations of wonder burst from every one present. But when he rose swiftly up into the air a wild cheer went up with him.

Up, up he went, till he was over a mile high.

They gazed up after him like men who had waked up to find themselves in a new world.

He made the grand circles which the eagle delights to make when he soars to a mere speck in the sky.

"Mr. Reade!" exclaimed the old settler, grasping Frank's hand and wringing it with ten horsepower, "you are the greatest man that ever lived, an' I can lick the man who says I'm a liar."

Frank laughed and said:

"I have simply found out the secret of the birds. It was not a difficult thing to do."

"Pshaw! Old Solomon tried it, an' failed," said the old settler. "An' he knowed more'n anybody else in his time. Why, hang it, man, old George Washington himself didn't know enough to fly."

"Maybe he didn't try," suggested Frank.

"He had sense enough not to," said Joe Bradfield.

"I don't think anybody in those days gave the subject any thought," remarked Frank. "Because a man who would have dared to undertake it would have been looked up as a lunatic. In these days a man is allowed to follow the bent of his inclinations, so long as he does not interfere with or annoy his neighbors."

"Yes, that's so," added his father. "You see now that it is possible for a man to fly."

"Yes, but I never would have believed it had I not seen it," said Mr. Bradfield.

"Have you all had supper?" Frank asked, suddenly changing the subject.

"No, and we're mighty hungry," said the old settler.

Pomp had enough game to feed the party, and so set to work to cook it. In a half hour or so he had a good supper for them, which they all enjoyed like men with appetites.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HAPPY CAMPERS—A RUNNING FIGHT—POMP'S RENEGADE.

The supper disposed of, the men lit their pipes and sat around the camp fire to smoke and talk.

They told the story of the terrible atrocities of the Apaches in their last raid up the left bank of the river.

The very recital of their horrible deeds was enough to make the blood of one run cold.

"I am glad I did not spare any of them I got hold of to-day," said Frank. "I managed to get hold of four, and they are lying out there in the grass now, about a mile or so away."

"I laid out three myself," added Mr. Reade.

"Yes, I saw you do that," said Mrs. Bradfield. "Barney and Pomp got away with five or six more," Frank continued. "They are old hands at the business, and haven't much love for the rascals."

"Dat's er fac," said Pomp, who, busy at the remains of the supper, was listening to all that was said.

"That was very bad punishment for the wretches."

"Yes, and they received a scare they will not soon get over. They never saw a man fly through the air before, and very naturally concluded that the Great Spirit was angry with them. Why, they never fired a shot, nor made any resistance whatever."

"Of course not. Whoever heard of a man in the flesh flying like a bird through the air? Nine out of ten white men would have been scared by it."

The stars came out and lit up the clear sky with millions of twinkling lights. Hour after hour passed, and still they sat and talked, asking the Reades thousands of questions about their inventions.

"If you would take that air-ship," said one of the party, "and sail over this part of the world and kill every redskin in it, we settlers would build you a monument higher than the tower of Babel was."

Mr. Reade laughed, and asked:

"How high was that?"

"It was so high that one's voice calling from the top could not be understood by those at the bottom, which is how the confusion of tongues began."

"By George!" exclaimed Frank, laughing. "That is the most logical as well as theological explanation I ever heard of that affair."

"Well, ain't it right?"

"I don't know. I am not prepared to say it is wrong."

"Well, that's the kind of a monument we'll build to the memory of the man who wipes out the last of the tarnal redskins."

"It would certainly be a great temptation," remarked Frank. "But what would you build it of?"

"Indian bones," was the short, sharp reply.

By and by the time came for them to retire to their blankets.

The Bradfields were given the tent, and the rest slept out under the trees, whilst three stood guard to prevent surprise by the redskins.

They all slept well, and morning found them greatly refreshed.

Pomp and Barney were up betimes—the former preparing breakfast and the latter securing game. In due time a splendid repast was ready, of which they all ate heartily.

The breakfast finished, it was decided that the band of settlers would return to their homes at once, and that the Reades were to accompany them on the wing and protect them from the savages in the event that they should meet a large war party.

Frank and his father agreed to go and render all the assistance in their power.

Preparations to start were at once begun, and in an hour they started.

Both the Reades, with Barney and Pomp, flew high above them and headed North, in the direction of the settlement the Apaches had raided.

The party on horseback could not make the distance in one day, so they stopped in the middle of the afternoon and encamped in a heavy timbered place, near the same river on which they slept the night before.

The smoke of their camp-fire had not been going up an hour ere a large war-party of Apaches saw it and rushed for the scalps of the whites.

But when yet two miles away they were dis-

covered by Pomp and Barney at the same time.

"Dars dem injuns!" cried Pomp.

Instantly the camp was thrown into the greatest excitement.

Every man sprang for his rifle and stood ready to do battle.

"Keep cool, men!" cried Frank; "keep cool and your powder dry. When they come up near enough to show their intentions we will fly at 'em, give 'em a scare and send 'em helter skelter in every direction, too demoralized to shoot even a skunk. Then you can charge in on them and wipe out nearly the whole band."

"We will wipe 'em all out," cried Joe Bradfield, eager to get at the red-skins. "They've burnt down my home and I want some satisfaction for it."

The red-skins saw the little party of whites, and, thinking that they were strong enough to capture them, came on at a full gallop.

When within a quarter of a mile of the whites, the red-skins were dumfounded at seeing four of them spread out immense wings and fly upward like great eagles.

They halted and gazed at the flying men or monsters, not knowing whether to advance or retreat.

At the same time the whites on horseback charged with a yell.

Barney and Pomp also yelled at the top of their lungs, and swooped down toward them.

That was too much for Indian superstition. They could face men on foot or horseback, but when they came through the air like great winged dragons, it was more than they could stand.

They broke and fled in the greatest confusion.

Crack, crack! went Barney and Pomp's revolvers, and the murderous Apaches caught the bullets in their backs.

Crack, crack! and Frank and his father opened on them a minute or two later.

With howls of fear they divided into small parties, and sought safety in flight alone.

The settlers whose houses had been destroyed by the red-skins pursued them, and shot them down right and left.

For miles and miles the running fight lasted, and more than two-thirds of the band fell.

In the chase Pomp happened to follow the chief of the band—a big, ugly fellow, whose name had long been a terror to the border settlers. There were five in the party, and one after one they went down under the merciless revolver of the black man, till only the chief remained.

Seeing only one left, Pomp flew low enough to kick him on the head with his foot.

"Ugh!" grunted the Indian. "Walking Bear heap afraid!"

"Ugh!" retorted Pomp, who had overheard him. "You's er bad Injun, an' I'se gwine fo' ter kill yer!"

The savage in his terror turned his face up toward Pomp.

He saw what he had never seen before in all his life—a black man.

A yell of terror escaped him.

He threw himself on his horse's neck and made no effort to resist or to escape.

Crack! crack!

Two bullets in his back, just under his left shoulder, settled him, and he tumbled off his pony into the grass in the agonies of death.

"Dar now!" exclaimed Pomp. "You's er good Injun now. You'se won't kill no more white folks."

Then he turned to rejoin Frank and the others.

He found them scattered in various directions in the pursuit. The settlers were also putting in some hard work, running down and wiping out every red-skin they could catch up with.

Seeing three red-skins making together, though more than a mile away, he resolved to pursue them and wipe 'em out.

Off he started, loading up his revolver as he went.

It was not a long chase, but the advantage was on the side of the man with wings. The fleeing red-skins looked back and saw that the winged man was gaining on them, and that he was black.

"Hi, dar!" yelled Pomp, and they laid out almost at full length on their horses in their frantic efforts to get away.

Crack! went the revolver, and the savage uttered a yell and tumbled into the grass.

Then the next one went down with a bullet in the back of his head.

The third one sprang from his horse and fell on his knees, crying piteously:

"Mercy! Mercy!"

"De lor' gorrarnighty!" gasped Pomp, "dat ain't no injun!"

He made a circle above him and came back where he was.

"You'se ain't no Injun," he cried to the man. "No—I am a white man," replied the fellow, still on his knees. "They made me paint up and go with them. I had to do it to save my life."

Pomp was undecided what to do for a moment or so. He knew that Frank was death on white renegades, and would never take one prisoner if he could avoid it.

"Ef dat am so," he said, "git up an' go back to whar de white folks are."

"Please let me get away from the red-skins," pleaded the man. "The white men in that party may not know me, and—"

"Shet up, an' go long wid yer, I tole yer!" cried Pomp. "I'll shoot yer ef yer don't," and he aimed his revolver at him as he spoke.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FATE OF THE RENEGADE.

The renegade had no other recourse but to obey.

The logic of a loaded revolver in the hand of a determined man is generally irresistible. But few men can resist it.

Besides, when the holder of the revolver has wings with which he can fly through the air like a bird, a certain superstition is apt to come through the mind of one who had never seen such things before.

The renegade did not know what to make of the man with wings.

That he was a real live negro he strongly suspected, both from his voice and color.

But who ever heard of a negro flying?

Certainly he had not, and so the renegade submitted, not seeing any other way of saving his life.

"Go long wid you'se now," ordered Pomp, "or I'll shoot you'se full ob holes."

He did "go long" in the direction of where Mrs. Bradfield and her daughter, with two or three men, were waiting for the others to return.

Pomp flew round and round, making great circles in the air, but keeping his eye on his prize all the time.

When the man came up to the others, they were somewhat surprised, and one of them asked:

"Why did you come back?"

"Because I am a white man; have been waiting for the chance to escape from the Apaches these two years past."

"Great snakes, is that so?" exclaimed one of the men.

"Yes. I have been with them over two years."

"Where did you come from?"

"Texas."

"How did they get you?"

"They attacked our party and killed all but three of us."

"Did they adopt you into their tribe?"

"They told us we could have our choice—become Apaches, and go on the war-path with 'em, or else be burnt at the stake. We thought it best to save our lives and escape when we got a chance."

"Poor fellows," murmured Mrs. Bradfield, sympathetically. "Have you ever killed any whites while playing Indian?"

"No, I never harmed a single white person. On the other hand, I helped two young men to make their escape one night."

"Good! Here comes the others. They'll be glad to see you."

Frank and his father came back together, having emptied their revolvers into the backs of the fleeing Apaches.

The renegade looked them full in the face as they alighted.

They returned his gaze.

"How did you come to take an Indian alive, Pomp?" Frank asked.

"Dat ain't no Injun, Marse Frank," replied Pomp. "Dat's a painted white man, sah."

"The deuce!" and Frank laid a hand on his revolver as he glared at the renegade.

"Yes, I am a white man in red paint," said the renegade, "and I have been trying for two years to get back to my friends. There were three of us in the same fix."

Pomp was astonished.

"De lor' gorrarnighty!" he gasped. "Dat man done his best fo' ter git away, Marse Frank, and didn't gib up till he seed me hab de drop on 'im."

"I guess that was about the truth of it," said Frank. "I've seen renegades before, and understand their game."

"I retreated as long as the two warriors who were watching me kept up. The moment they went down I sprang off my horse and gave up, making no attempt to conceal my identity."

"Where did you come from?"

"Texas."

"I've seen a good many renegades from Texas, but never a good one in red paint. I won't have

anything to do with you. These friends here can believe your story or not, as they please."

By and by the rest of the settlers came up, and as they did so they eyed the painted renegade very suspiciously.

The old settler, a gnarled old specimen of humanity, came up and began questioning him.

"Do yer know me?" he asked.

"No—never saw you before."

"Never did, eh?"

"Not till this moment."

"What's your white name?"

"Whitaker."

"From Texas, eh?"

"Yes."

"Been with them redskins two years?"

"Yes."

"And couldn't git away?"

"No; we tried several times to escape, but were watched too closely."

Turning to his comrades, the old settler said:

"He may be all right. Take 'im to the river an' wash the Injun off him."

"Yes, wash the paint off," exclaimed a half dozen others, and about half the party went off toward the river with him.

Frank remained behind with the party that had charge of the two ladies, and suggested that the arms of the dead Apaches should be gathered up.

"They have been out on a plundering expedition," he said, "and may have a good deal of plunder with them."

"Yes, that's so. They may have enough money to buy us something to live on till we can get up again," said one, whose all had been swept away by the merciless wretches.

They went out in the various directions, and for three hours were coming back in parties, bearing arms and valuables of almost every description. Several dead Indians had hundreds of dollars concealed about them, besides watches and jewelry. The aggregate amounted to something like \$3,000.

"That will be of great service when divided among those who suffered most at their hands," remarked Frank.

"Yes," said Joe Bradfield; "it is a Godsend to me, I know."

"Divide it at the next camp, or when you reach your settlement."

"Here comes the men from the river," said one of the party, as those who had taken the renegade to the river to wash him hove in sight on the skirts of the timber.

Frank looked in that direction, and said:

"Yes, but the prisoner is not with them."

"That's so," chorused a dozen voices, and all waited eagerly for the others to come up and report.

"Where's the prisoner?" Frank asked of the old settler, whose name was Joe Wilkes.

"Hanging to a tree on the banks of the river," was the reply.

"What was the matter with him?"

"Worst renegade that ever lived. Uncle Joe knew him," said another in the party, "and so did two others."

"What did he say?"

"Denied his real name, and said that Dan Barwood—his real name—was down in Arizona with another war party. But Uncle Joe knew him, and so we swung him up. He had about \$200 worth of plunder and money on him."

"That was enough to settle him," said Frank.

"You did right in swinging him up."

"Dat's er fac," said Pomp. "Ef I knowed dat I wud er shot 'im de fust time."

"It's allers safer to shoot a white man in Injun paint," said the old settler, "an' don't b'lieve er word he says. White men that are white inside don't never let the paint stay on their faces long enough to git dry. They somehow work their way out of the hole—they do."

"Dat's er fac," assented Pomp, with a philosophical seriousness that caused the others to burst into a hearty laugh.

The party then went into camp again, thanking our heroes like brave, true men for the assistance they had rendered them.

"Oh, that's all right," said Frank. "You fellows would have done the same thing for us."

"Of course we would," and they all shook hands with him and his father.

The evening was delightful, and every one seemed in the best of spirits, as the treacherous Apaches had received two checks that would teach them a lesson they would not soon forget.

The next day they resumed the journey, and before sunset had reached the settlement, where the ashes of their homes alone remained of their possessions.

CHAPTER XX.

A BATTLE WITH APACHES—CAPTIVE WOMEN RESCUED AND RETURNED HOME.

BEING hard pressed to remain with them till the next morning, our heroes decided to stop with the rescued settlers for the night.

The tent was stretched and game killed for supper. By the time supper was over several more men came up who had managed to escape from the Apaches.

But several men had been killed, and women and children carried off who had not been heard from.

"Seven women and about a dozen girl children," said old Joe Wilkes. "Them redskins ought not to be allowed to live in this country."

"That's so," said Joe Bradfield.

"How many parties were out?" Frank asked.

"We met two bands, and only found Mrs. Bradfield and her daughter."

"Nobody knows how many were out," said one. "They divide up in small parties to confuse the whites, and keep 'em from combining to pursue. It's a sharp dodge."

"Well, you fellows go on building your own houses, and father and I will see if we can't find the other missing ones."

Every man sprung up and caught our heroes by the hand.

"We'll never forget you," said old Joe Wilkes, tears in his eyes. "But if you pass a redskin and don't try to wipe 'im out, I'll never forgive you."

"Them's my sentiments!" cried Joe Bradfield.

"The reds ain't got no friends in this settlement."

"He doesn't put it strong enough," said another.

"Yes, I know that," said Frank, laughing.

"Still, it doesn't matter much how you wipe out an Indian, so long as you wipe him out."

"That's the logic!"

"Good gospel!"

"Sound sense!"

"Good law!"

"Shoot every redskin you meet!"

Such was the rage against the murderous Apaches, that every one had a hard word to utter against them.

"I agree with you, friends," said Frank, "as I know my father does—"

"Me too, bedad!" put in Barney.

"I'm dar too!" remarked Pomp.

"We are all there," said Frank. "But just now we want to find the missing women and children, and bring them back."

"Yes—yes!"

"Then we may try to execute full vengeance upon the redskin wretches."

"That's so!" all around.

They retired to their blankets at a late hour, and slept peacefully till sunrise. After breakfast Frank and his father prepared to go in search of the party that had carried off the other women and children.

After bidding them good-bye, with many a hearty God bless you, they spread their great wings and went up to a great height.

"They must have gone back to their own home," remarked Mr. Reade, as they turned southward again.

"Yes, of course they did. Whenever they go out on a raid like that they make for their villages again just as soon as they get hold of any plunder."

"Then we had better make a straight flight for the Apache country."

"Yes, I think so."

All day long they flew, crossing rivers and strips of timber, with here and there bald, barren spots of arid soil and stone.

"We may find some of their bands on the return home," remarked Frank.

"Yes, I've been on the lookout for them every hour in the day."

"Dar dey is!" cried Pomp, pointing away out on the right.

"Where?"

"Out dar."

Frank looked, shook his head, and said:

"I can't see anybody."

"You'se er gittin' old, Marse Frank," said Pomp. "Yer eyes ain't good like mine—he, he, he!"

"Oh, go soak your wool," said Frank. "You don't see anybody."

"Ah! He is right!" exclaimed Mr. Reade, looking through his glass. "I see them, but they are a long way off."

"Yes, sah, dey is," said Pomp.

"Well, I'll be hanged if I can see them," put in Frank, after looking for them in vain for two or three minutes.

"They are skirting that timber out there, several miles off."

"I see the timber, that's all."

"Well, when we get nearer you'll see some Indians," answered Mr. Reade.

"Well, the sooner we get there the better," said Frank.

"Of course."

And all four turned in the direction of the timber, and traveled at great speed.

In a little while Frank, who had kept his eyes on the timber, sung out:

"Ah, I see them now! There's quite a large party of them. Can you make out how many there are, and whether they have any prisoners?"

"Not yet," replied his father, leveling his glass at the party. "I can tell in a few minutes more."

Ten minutes later he took another peep through the glass, and immediately exclaimed:

"There they are—a dozen or more—women and children."

"Good!" exclaimed Frank; "they are the ones we are after, but we want to get them away from that timber."

"Why?" his father asked.

"Because they will take refuge there, and we shall not be able to get at them."

"Ah, that is so! They could shoot at us from behind the trees. But how are we to do it?"

"Oh, they'll have to leave the timber some time, so we have no other recourse but to wait and watch."

"In that case, then," remarked Mr. Reade, "we had better keep as far away from them as possible, so as not to excite their fears."

"Yes," assented Frank. "Why not drop down in that piece of timber on the left there? There's an open space of five or six miles between them."

"That's a good idea. Curiosity may lead them to run over there to see what kind of birds we are."

"Dat's er fac," chuckled Pomp.

"Bedad!" exclaimed Barney, "it's a blackbird they'll find."

"Dat's er fac," retorted Pomp. "Blackbirds don't show no white feeders."

"Oh, stop your chinning and come on," cried Frank, making a turn to the left and leading the way toward the piece of timber in that direction.

The others followed and made straight for the timber.

Every once in awhile Mr. Reade would turn his glass in the direction of the Indians, to see if they were observed.

Suddenly he exclaimed:

"Ah, they have stopped to gaze at us!"

"Good," said Frank. "They'd give half their plunder to find out what we are."

"Well, let us alight just in the edge of the timber, and maybe they'll follow us."

In due time they reached the timber, and slowly descended to the earth.

The band of Indians skirting the edge of the further timber were amazed at the sight of four great-winged objects flying through the air.

They stopped and gazed in awe-stricken wonder, until they saw the strange objects descend to the earth.

Then they held a consultation, and the result was a determination to discover what kind of birds they had just seen.

With their chief at their head they started across the piece of open prairie which lay between the two strips of timber.

The distance was something like five miles across, yet, nothing daunted, they urged their jaded steeds to the top of their speed.

When a little more than half way across they were surprised to see the four winged strangers rise in the air again.

They were still more surprised when the four great birds started in their direction.

They halted and held their rifles in readiness to fire.

Straight at them went our heroes.

When within a couple of hundred yards of the savages all four yelled at the top of their lungs.

The redskins had not dreamed of men flying through the air, and when they looked up and saw men with great wings swooping down upon them, an undefinable fear fell upon them.

They looked at each other in terror-stricken awe for a few moments, and one of them started on a run.

Then Barney uttered a wild Irish yell that awakened the echoes for miles around.

That started the entire band into a wild panic.

"Follow the party with the women!" cried Frank, and all four swooped down upon the few savages left in charge of the captive women.

Crack! crack! went the revolvers, and a redskin yelled at each shot.

Then all four sent a rattling volley after them, and several tumbled from their ponies into the grass.

Every redskin struck out for himself, taking no

thought of the prisoners, who were as badly frightened as the Indians themselves.

Seeing how frightened the women were, Frank turned back from the pursuit of the savages and flew close by them.

"Be not afraid. We are friends," he cried, and then he settled down in the grass, folded his wings, and walked up to where the trembling women were huddled together on their ponies.

"In the name of Heaven, who are you?" exclaimed one of the women.

"I am Frank Reade, the inventor of the flying machine. We have seen your friends, and have been looking for you."

"Thank God! thank God!" exclaimed the woman, and they all burst into tears of joy.

Then some of them laughed and cried alternately until they became hysterical, so great was their joy at being rescued from the terrible fate that threatened them.

In the meantime Mr. Reade, Barney, and Pomp were pursuing the retreating Apaches, and mercilessly pelting them with bullets from their revolvers, nor did they stop until the remnant of the band found shelter in the heavy timber.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RETURN OF THE RESCUED WOMEN.

WHEN the last savage had disappeared in the timber Mr. Reade, Barney and Pomp returned to join Frank and the rescued women.

They settled down near by, and then walked up to shake hands with them.

A happier group of women and children was never seen. They cried, they sang and shouted, while tears of joy streamed down their faces.

"You are men sent from God!" exclaimed one of the women. "Messengers from God fly like the angels."

"Don't be too extravagant, now," said Mr. Reade, laughing. "The lord didn't make these wings, and yet I cannot but think that Providence sent us to your assistance."

"Oh, I know it—I know it!" exclaimed several of the women.

"Well, are you too tired to ride back to your old home?"

"No—no—no!" they cried.

"Well," he said, "ride ahead, keeping due north, and we will fly above you to keep watch and guard over you."

"I declare!" exclaimed one of the women, "it seems so like a dream, to see men flying through the air like birds."

"Yes," said another, "and to have them fly through the air to our rescue."

The day was so far gone, however, that it was utterly impossible for them to reach their old home that night.

So Frank directed them to turn aside to a strip of timber and encamp there till the following morning.

They did as they were told, and in a little while were as happy as a band of children in establishing a camp.

Barney and Pomp took the pieces of tent from the four knapsacks, put them together, and erected a tent large enough to shelter all the women and children.

Then they built a huge camp fire, while Frank and his father went in search of game.

They soon ran down a deer, and killed him, returning to camp with more venison than could be consumed.

"Oh, let us cook it, let us cook it," cried the happy women.

"We are not in the least tired," returned Frank and his father. "Flying is not at all tiresome."

They were forced, however, to give way to the women and let them cook the supper, and they cooked it well and quickly, and when it was ready they all ate with ravenous appetites.

"Oh!" exclaimed one, "I never tasted anything so good in my life."

"Nor I," said another.

"Ah," returned Frank, "that is because you have regained your freedom. A crust of bread is enjoyed more by the freeman than the rarest viands are by the suppliant slave."

"I have often heard that," said one, "but could never believe it till now."

"Well, you believe it now, do you not?"

"Indeed, I do. Oh, I cannot express how joyously happy I feel. My home is destroyed, but that matters not, since I and daughter have escaped."

The evening was spent in pleasant conversation around the camp-fire, after which the women and children retired to sleep in the tent, whilst the men slept by the fire and took turns at standing guard over the camp.

The night wore away at last, and at the first dawn of day Pomp and Barney were up making the fire, while Frank and his father went off to the river to catch fish.

In an hour's time they returned with as much fish as was needed, and the women soon had them broiling on the coals.

A little after sunrise the entire party set out on their homeward journey.

All day long Frank and his father hovered over the group like watchful angels, pointing the way for them.

Just before the sun sank below the western horizon a party of horsemen were seen coming to meet them.

Mr. Reade leveled his field-glass at them, and then cried out to the women below:

"Your friends are coming to meet you. I see them a long way off."

What a glad, joyful cry went up from the happy wives and mothers.

An hour later a party of men dashed up to the group of women, and glad shouts of greeting ascended to our heroes.

Wives were clasped in the arms of their husbands, and children were pressed to the hearts of their parents.

Again were Frank and his father forced to spend a night with the warm-hearted settlers, who never tired of expressing their gratitude toward them.

It was a happy camp that night, notwithstanding the fact that a number of friends and relatives had been slain by the Indians.

Said old Joe Wilkes, as he grasped our hero by the hand:

"Young man, if I had your wings I'd never let a day pass without killing fifty redskins."

"That would be pretty hot work," said Frank, laughing.

"Yes," returned the old man, "hot for the Injuns. I'd kill 'em all—squaws and papooses too. Such varmints ought not to be allowed to breathe. They are worse than rattlesnakes."

"If they don't behave themselves," said Frank, "I think the whites will rise up and exterminate them. But as for myself, I am not waging any war against them, except in cases of this kind, and when I do I show them no mercy."

Early next morning our heroes took leave of the settlers and winged their way westward, having lost several days rendering assistance to them.

The day was fine and the wind just right for rapid flying.

Nothing occurred to interfere with their progress.

Some time before sunset they came in sight of the range of mountains that traverses the length of Colorado.

"Ah!" exclaimed Frank, "how I wish we could reach those mountains before sunset."

"That is impossible," said Mr. Reade.

"I know that full well," returned Frank, "for they must be more than twenty miles away. Still I cannot help wishing we could reach them."

"Why are you so anxious to get there?"

"Because we shall find a spring of clear, cool water at the foot of every hill, and the mountain air is more bracing than that of the plains."

"Look at dem birds," cried Pomp. "Dey mus' be eagles."

"Bedad, right ye are," said Barney, as a half dozen or more great eagles came swooping toward them as if to dispute the supremacy of the air with the new-comers.

The eagles were coming in a swift, straight course, as if about to seize upon their prey.

"Let them have the revolver if they come too near," cried Frank, "and don't let them strike your wings, as they may cut them with their sharp beak."

In a couple of minutes more the shrill screams of the eagles were plainly heard.

On they came, till it seemed as if they intended to attack our heroes.

"Look out!" cried Frank, blazing away at one of them with his revolver.

The eagle, as if surprised, uttered a shrill scream and passed a few feet over his head.

Then he turned and made a dive, as if to attack him on the back.

"Look out!" cried his father, "he will strike you on the back."

It was not an easy matter to turn suddenly, so they were forced to watch for each other to prevent the eagles from attacking them in the rear.

Two very large ones assailed Pomp with astonishing audacity; but one of them paid dearly for his temerity.

He approached too close, and received a bullet through his body which sent him tumbling earthward, filling the air with his shrill screams.

Pomp's triumph, however, was short-lived, for, as he was chuckling over his exploits, the other eagle swooped down upon him from behind, and struck him on the head with his dangerous talons.

"Oh, de Lor' gorryamity!" yelled Pomp.

"Take him off, take him off, Marse Frank!"

CHAPTER XXII.

POMP GETS WORSTED BY THE EAGLES.

POMP's yell caused the others to turn their attention to him.

To their utter consternation, they beheld an immense eagle with his talons buried in the top of Pomp's hat, while both were screaming at the top of their voices.

They judged from the way Pomp yelled for help that the eagle had seized upon something else besides the hat.

"Shoot him—shoot him," screamed Pomp, and Barney blazed away, though he was some fifty feet or more distant from him.

"Stop that, Barney," shouted Frank; "you will kill Pomp."

"Bedad," returned Barney, "it's the eagle that's killin' him, I think."

Pomp reached up and caught the eagle by the leg, but the great bird used his sharp beak with such energy that Pomp quickly withdrew his hand and redoubled his yells for help.

Suddenly Pomp threw his revolver above his head and fired three or four shots at random.

The last one took effect, and the gallant bird released his hold and started tumbling toward terra firma, carrying Pomp's hat with him.

"Oh, de Lor' save us!" cried Pomp. "Dat eagle done gone an' tore my head off."

Frank flew around pretty close to him and saw the blood streaming down his face, and that one hand was badly cut by the sharp beak.

"Are you much hurt, Pomp?" he asked.

"Marse Frank, he's done gone an' split my head open," and poor Pomp groaned as though suffering great pain.

"I guess we'd better go down," said Frank; "we can get your hat and see how much damage has been done."

When the other two eagles went down their mates followed them, nor would they leave them until the near approach of our heroes drove them away.

Barney secured Pomp's hat and plucked a feather from the eagle's wing as a trophy of the victory.

An examination of Pomp's head revealed the fact that the sharp claws of the bird had cut him in several places, making very painful though not serious wounds.

"You'll have a sore head for a few days, Pomp," said Frank, "but you got the best of the eagle, after all."

"Dat's er fac'," groaned Pomp, "but I doan't wan' no more eagles."

"Oh, well, it might have been worse. He might have gouged an eye out or cut your ears off. You're in luck, if you only knew it."

"Der Lor' save us, Marse Frank. If that am luck, I doan't want it. Dey am wuss dan redskins."

Barney handed him his hat with the eagle feather stuck in it.

"Reckon I doan't want no hat," said Pomp, as he took it and stored it away in his pack. "It am goin' to be a mighty sore head."

"Not so bad as you think, Pomp," said Frank. "Let's hurry on till we strike water, where I can wash your hurts and put salve on them."

They rose on the wing again, and after going a few miles, discovered a brook winding its way between the hills.

"There a good place to camp!" exclaimed Mr. Reade. "I think we had better drop down there."

"Just what I was thinking," observed Frank.

They descended close by the brook, and immediately began preparing the camp. While Barney busied himself building a fire and putting up a tent, Frank took Pomp to the water and washed the blood from his scalp wound, after which he put on a liberal supply of a salve which he had long used for wounds of every description.

Then he bound his handkerchief around his head, and told him he could go to the hospital, and be a sick man if he wished.

"I ain't sick, Marse Frank," he said, "but I'se mity mad, I is."

"Why, what are you mad about, Pomp?"

"I'se mad about er fool nigger lettin' a eagle get on his head."

"Why, you couldn't help that."

"I doan't know about dat. Maybe so, dough. Er nigger am er fool, anyhow."

Frank laughed, and assisted him in binding up his hand, which had been so badly cut by the eagle's beak.

"Barney," called Frank, "you'll have to be chief cook and bottle-washer till Pomp's hand gets well."

"Yis, sorr," returned Barney; "av you give me a full bottle, it's a cook I'll be all the time."

"Yes, and you'd get cooked, too. You are to simply wash the bottle after we get through with it."

"Bedad, then, I'll kill ye all dead with my cookin'."

They all laughed but Pomp, and then went about their camp duties.

While the fire was making, Mr. Reade caught a mess of fish from the brook and brought them in.

Barney proved to be a first-rate cook, and was greatly encouraged by the flattering remarks of Frank and his father.

After supper the pipes were brought out, and a discussion of the events of the day followed.

"We are not making very fast time in crossing the continent," remarked Mr. Reade, puffing away at his pipe.

"No," replied Frank, "but we are having a good deal of fun."

"I don't know where dat fun is," remarked Pomp.

"Why, you've had more fun than anybody else," retorted Frank. "You butted two men at the railroad station, killed several Indians, and are the only one of the party that has killed an eagle."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp, "an' I'se de only one dat like to got mos' eat up by der eagle. Der ain' no fun in it, an' if der is, I doan't want it."

The truth is, Pomp's head and hand were very sore, and he was not feeling in a good humor by any means.

"Old man," said Frank, "you are getting homesick. You must have dreamed about your old woman last night. You had better take a pull at this. It may do you good," and he passed him a wicker-covered flask containing some fine old brandy.

The stern wrinkles on Pomp's brow began to disappear as he unscrewed the top. Then, as he obtained a whiff of the fragrant liquid, a broad smile illumined his face, which widened into a grin as he looked at Barney out of the corner of his left eye.

As he turned the bottom of the flask skyward, his features gave forth an expression of supreme happiness, which seemed to increase as the fluid gurgled down his throat.

"Howly Moses!" groaned Barney, with a look of distress on his ruddy face. "It's as dry as dust I am. Would yez be afther laving some of that for meself?"

"What's der matter wid you, Barney?" Pomp asked, as he unbuttoned the flask from his lips.

"Dat eagle didn't bite you."

"Bedad, then," returned Barney, "it's bitten wid sympathy I am."

"Poor fellow!" said Frank, laughing and passing the flask over to Barney; "it's very dry sympathy, I guess."

"It's roight ye are. Shure, an' I am dry whenever I think of it," and then he proceeded to make some astronomical observations with complete satisfaction to himself.

When Frank received the flask again it was much lighter in weight than when it first left his hands.

"By George!" he said, "if we meet any more eagles I'll have to hunt up a distillery. They are worse than snake-bites."

Pomp and Barney grinned and felt good, and in a little while all four retired to their blankets to dream of home, flights in the air, and battles with eagles and redskins.

They arose early next morning, and after a hearty breakfast, resumed their flight toward the mountains.

By noon they were passing over the rugged peaks of the Rocky Mountains, some of which reached up into the regions of perpetual snow.

"Here is a good place for a summer residence," remarked Frank to his father.

"Yes," was the reply; "but one would want wings to reach it."

"The time will come," said Frank, "when nearly every one can have a pair of wings with which to fly."

"I think so, too, but it will be some time hence, as people have to be educated up to the risk."

They passed around a snow-capped peak, leaving it to the right, and nearly all the afternoon they sailed over rugged fastnesses, upon which, perhaps, no human being had ever looked.

The scenery was wild, weird and grand, with here and there great chasms thousands of feet in depth.

"This is the wildest scene I ever beheld," remarked Mr. Reade.

"Yes," returned Frank, "I have crossed the Rockies several times, but never saw anything like this before."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A BATTLE WITH THE GRIZZLIES.

A LITTLE while after passing over the highest points of the Rockies they began the descent of the western slope, and Frank discovered a large brownish-looking object, as big as a full-grown ox, crossing a plateau some two or three thousand feet below him.

"What is that down there, father?" he asked.

"Where?" Mr. Reade inquired.

"Directly under us on that plateau."

Mr. Reade brought his glass to bear, and a moment later exclaimed:

"Why, it's the biggest kind of a grizzly."

"By George!" ejaculated Frank, "we must have some fun with him."

"We must look out he don't have some with us," said Mr. Reade, "as they are very hard to kill."

"Oh, you must keep on the wing and only swoop down near enough to give him a shot. They are game and have never been known to run from an enemy, so I think he will stand and take all that we can give him," and with that Frank began a rapid descent toward the earth.

The others followed quickly, and when within a few hundred feet of the beast yelled lustily at him.

Bruin rose on his haunches, growled, and glared defiantly around, as if in search of the enemy who had dared to challenge him.

Frank swooped down within twenty or thirty feet of him, and gave him a shot.

The bullet struck him on the shoulder.

A hoarse growl escaped the beast, which seemed to be as large as a full-grown ox, and he rubbed the spot where the bullet struck as if brushing away a bee that had stung him.

Then Mr. Reade and Barney swooped down and gave him each a shot.

He growled louder and more fiercely, and seemed to try to reach up to strike at his enemy.

"Take aim at his head," said Frank. "We can't kill him with a hundred shots in the body, but a shot in the ear or eye might finish him."

Then all four opened on him at once, circling around him just out of his reach.

His rage was something terrible and grand.

He leaped upward and struck savagely at the air.

Then he would tear up the earth with his great claws in impotent rage, and almost shook the mountain with his roar.

"Bedad!" exclaimed Barney, "it's an ugly baste he is."

"Be careful and keep out of his reach," cautioned Frank. "He could tear a lion to pieces. Take good aim at his head."

They kept up the fire till their weapons were empty, without having hit him in any vital spot.

At last a bullet from Mr. Reade's rifle struck him in the right eye, and penetrated the brain.

A frightful roar followed, and the terrible beast rolled over and over in his death agony, tearing up the earth and stones with his immense claws with such terrible force as to cause our heroes to shudder as they beheld it.

"Good Heavens!" cried Frank; "what powerful beasts those grizzlies are!"

"They have no equal," said his father. "I think a full-grown lion would be but a kitten pitted against one of them."

A half hour passed ere any of the party dared to descend to earth, as the terrible brute continued to exhibit signs of dangerous vitality.

They circled around, watching its dying struggles until they thought it was perfectly safe to descend.

"Look out dar!" exclaimed Pomp, as Frank alighted and approached the monster. "Dat bar's playin' possum."

"I guess not," returned Frank. "Bears don't play that game."

And he was right. The great brute had about given up the fight, and passed in his chips.

A bullet in the brain of the most powerful animal in the world will end his existence sooner or later, and it proved to be the case with the grizzly.

With one last convulsive movement of his powerful limbs he stretched himself out, uttered a despairing growl, and was dead.

"That ends him," cried Frank, "and I'll bet my wings that he is the only grizzly that was ever killed on the fly."

"I think you would win the bet," said his father, alighting beside him. "He is the largest one I ever saw. I don't think that we could make any one believe that we had killed such a monster on the wing."

"Perhaps not, but we know that we did. I am sorry we can't take his skin with us to stuff and show his size."

All four went up and laid their hands on the dead monster, lifted his paws, and examined his teeth.

They were thus engaged when they were startled by a fierce roar a short distance further up the mountain.

Looking around, they beheld another grizzly, nearly as large as the one they had just killed, coming down the mountain-side.

"Look out! look out!" cried Frank, spreading his wings out faster than he ever did before, and he was the first to mount in the air.

Pomp, having a sore hand, was the last to

rise, and the angry beast was not a dozen rods from him as his feet left the earth.

"That must be his mate," said Mr. Reade.

"Undoubtedly," returned Frank; "and if so, she will soon let us know it."

The grizzly rushed to the side of the dead one and felt of him with her great paws, growling the while. Then, as if convinced that he was dead, she began a series of fierce, defiant roars that awoke all the echoes of the mountains for miles around.

"Golly, ain't she mad!" exclaimed Pomp.

"Be the powers av darkness, but it's a bad one she is!" cried Barney.

"Shall we attack her?" asked Frank of his father.

"Of course. What is the use of leaving such a dangerous creature alive?"

They then opened fire on the angry she bear, and a repetition of the first fight followed.

About thirty shots were fired ere she succumbed, and our heroes had the satisfaction of hearing her last gasp.

"I claim that this is no small feat," said Frank. "A hundred men on foot would have taken to their heels and given the whole mountain to these bears."

"No doubt of that," returned his father. "I am sure I would have done some tall running myself. To meet one of these monsters, one wants a good Winchester repeating rifle and plenty of nerve."

"And even then they are dangerous," said Frank. "We killed one when we were in the air-ship and had Winchesters, and he seemed to be as hard to kill as these were."

They spent some time examining the bears and enjoying the magnificent scenery, after which they resumed their journey, leaving the two dead monsters as a gift to any other beast that felt disposed to make a meal of them.

They flew many miles that afternoon without passing beyond the range of mountains, and night found them in the vicinity of wild mountain scenery still.

"We must look for a good place to camp," said Frank, "where there is plenty of water and something to eat."

"We might have brought some grizzly steak with us," suggested his father.

"So we could, but somehow my appetite doesn't crave that kind of fare."

Mr. Reade laughed and asked Pomp if he wouldn't like some broiled eagle for supper.

"No, sah," was the prompt reply. "I doan't wan' no briled eagle."

They at last found a suitable place in a gorge in the mountain, through which passed a brook, whose source was the melting snow of the higher peaks.

"I think we will find this a good place," remarked Frank, "with plenty of cold water."

"Yes," remarked his father, "it may be pleasant enough if a grizzly doesn't come along to dispute the right of possession with us."

"I hardly think we will find any here, and I'm afraid we can't find a place to land."

With wings stretching thirty feet from tip to tip, they were compelled to have a sufficient space to admit of their descent to earth, and it began to look as though no such place could be found.

They passed down the mountain a couple of miles, following the course of the stream and looking for an open place.

At last one was found, and all four descended and made their way down to the water on foot.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Reade, looking searchingly around, "that this is just the place for grizzlies, and if we cook anything which gives out the least tempting odor, we shall have a visit from some of them."

"Well, we shall have to be on the lookout for them," remarked Frank, taking out a portion of his tent from his pack to have it put up for the night.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THEY MEET WITH MEDDLESOME STRANGERS.

FORTUNATELY, the night passed without anything occurring worthy of note, and our heroes resumed their flight the next morning, expecting to spend the next night somewhere on the great plains below.

The mountain slope lowered very gradually for many miles, with here and there a bold spur pointing skyward, as if acting as silent sentinels for the greater peaks beyond.

On the side of one of them a pair of huge grizzlies were seen, but our heroes concluded not to waste any more time at simply repeating an adventure, nor did they take any notice of a pair of eagles which seemed half disposed to dispute their passage.

As they passed beyond the mountains the earth seemed to recede from them, though they

had not risen but a few hundred feet beyond the starting-point of that morning.

"Marse Frank," said Pomp, "we am gettin' too high."

"No, we are not," returned Frank; "the earth is simply getting too low. We are about on a level with the mountain-tops."

"Yes, sah, but I wants to git down on a level with a hill-top. Dis am a liddel too high."

"But we can fly better up here, Pomp."

"I don't know about dat," replied Pomp, shaking his head. "I can fly better down dar near the groun'."

"You are mighty fond of the ground all of a sudden," said Frank.

"Yes, sah, I was made out ob dirt."

"Black dirt, eh?"

"I 'speak so."

"Well, we will get down closer to the ground," and they descended within a few hundred feet of the earth.

It was seen that it was quite a rich valley below them, but the farther away from the mountains they went the poorer and more stunted the vegetation seemed to be.

"We will soon strike the arid regions of southern Utah," said Frank.

"How long will it take us to cross them?" his father asked.

"I don't know," was the reply. "I've never been through this part before, but I should think it would take us a couple of days."

"Then we want to look out for rations, for game is scarce in arid regions."

"Oh, we can find plenty of jackass rabbits in the sage brush."

"I've had a good deal of experience with jackass rabbits," said his father, "and know they are about the hardest things in the world to catch. We would have to fire a good many shots with our revolvers, perhaps, ere we got one."

"Well, if we didn't get one, we could fall back on coyotes," suggested Frank, laughing.

"Coyotes are rather tough eating, and I rather doubt the healthfulness of the diet."

"You seem hard to please," remarked Frank.

"Yes, I must confess I am if the choice lays between jackass rabbits and coyotes. It seems to me we ought to strike some one of the tributaries of the Colorado river where we can get fish, if nothing else."

"Maybe we can, and I think we had better make an effort to do so. Suppose we race it for an hour?"

"Good—here goes," and calling to Barney and Pomp to hurry up, they started off at full speed on a straight westerly course.

After a mile was passed over a barren region that produced nothing better than the stunted sage brush.

Two hours of continuous flight brought them in sight of a small stream flowing southward, the name of which they did not know.

"It is too early in the day to make a camp," said Frank, "so we will push on. I think we can strike the Colorado before night."

"All right. Push ahead," and the flight was continued.

At a suggestion from Frank they flew within a hundred feet of the sage brush, to scare up the jackass rabbits and to see them run.

The first batch they started scattered in every direction.

"Der Lor' gorramin!" exclaimed Pomp, "dem rabbits can beat der littenin'."

"Can you catch one for your supper?" Mr. Reade asked.

"No, sah, a bullet couldn't ketch 'em."

Several shots were fired without effect, but the flight continued without interruption, passing over an arid, barren region.

A little before sunset the timber that fringed the Colorado river was espied in the distance.

"I think that is the river," said Frank.

"What river?"

"The Colorado."

"Ah, I hope so."

"It will push us hard to reach it before dark, but we'll do our best."

They worked hard and managed to reach the river just as the sun was disappearing below the horizon.

"Let Barney and Pomp fix the camp," said Frank, "and we'll try our luck at catching fish for supper, father."

"All right, you fix the tackle and I'll hunt for bait."

In ten minutes they were both ready and hastened down to the water's edge, where they cast their hooks in eager expectation.

The fish were slow to bite, and a quarter of an hour passed ere they got a nibble.

Then a small minnow was caught.

"By George!" said Frank, "that don't look like a supper for four hungry men."

"No. I should say not. It may be a good be-

ginning, though, for I'll use him for bait," and he removed the minnow and refastened him to the hook as tempting bait for larger game.

The wisdom of his action was soon apparent, for in a few minutes he received a jerk that came near pulling him in the water.

"By George!" exclaimed Frank, "that's a whopper!"

"Yes; he pulls like an alligator."

"Hold on to him, and don't let him get away."

The fish pulled like a horse, and Mr. Reade ran up and down the stream to play him until he could land him.

Frank dropped his tackle and went to his assistance, and together they succeeded in landing a forty-pound cat-fish.

"Ah, that's enough for supper," said Frank, as soon as they had the prize safely landed.

"Well, we've worked hard enough for it," said his father, wiping the perspiration from his face.

They dragged the fish to the camp, and in a little while were feasting on delicious cat-fish steak.

"This will last us across to the next river," said Mr. Reade, "and to-morrow morning we'd better cook a two-days' supply of rations."

"That is a good idea," replied Frank, "and it's such good meat that I'm willing to live on it for a week."

Scarcely had they finished supper ere a half-dozen white men were seen approaching the camp.

They were well armed, but did not appear to be particularly hostile to our heroes.

"Hello, strangers!" greeted the foremost, as he came forward.

"Hello, yourself!" responded Frank.

"We are glad to see you. Didn't expect to find any white men in this country."

"No," was the reply. "Don't many white people travel this way. Which way are you going?"

"We live up the river here a bit, and are looking for horse thieves."

"Horse thieves!" exclaimed Frank. "I don't think a horse thief would ever come to this country to make a living at the business."

"That shows you don't know much about it," said the man. "When one part of the country gets too hot for a man he moves westward, and the further this way he comes the worse he gets."

"Is that so?" Frank asked.

"Yes. Which way are you fellows going?"

"We are going still further West," was the reply. "But I claim the rule won't hold good in our case."

"Maybe so, but we want to be sure of it."

"What do you mean?" Frank asked. "Do you want to make sure we are not horse thieves?"

"Yes," and the man looked him full in the face as he spoke.

"Well, look around and see if you can find any horses."

"Oh, we don't expect a man to have the horse with him all the time."

"Look a here," said Frank, "it's my private opinion, publicly expressed, that you are a set of sneaking horse thieves yourselves, and therefore you had better make yourselves scarce around here."

"You talk pretty big for a man of your size," retorted the stranger.

"My size is equal to my talk, stranger. I don't wish to have any trouble with you, and therefore would advise you to keep away from us."

"We don't want any advice from you," and the half dozen men began to crowd around our heroes in a very menacing manner.

At a signal from Frank his father, Barney, and Pomp suddenly covered four of them with their revolvers.

"We've got the drop on you," said Frank, "and if any of you crook a finger, four of you are dead men. Drop your guns and hold up your hands!"

CHAPTER XXV.

OUR HERO PLAYS A JOKE ON THE MORMONS.

Six more astounded men were never seen than were those who stood before the threatening muzzles of our heroes' revolvers.

They saw that Frank had the drop on them, and yet, thinking that six to four were enough to carry the day, one of them attempted to bring his rifle to bear.

He was standing in front of Barney's revolver. Barney was a man of nerve and decision under such circumstances, and without a moment's hesitation he fired.

So close was he to the man that the powder from his revolver burned his face.

The man gave a groan and sank down in his tracks, and Barney very coolly covered another without lowering his weapon.

"Don't shoot!" hoarsely gasped the man at whom Barney aimed.

"Up wid yer hands, yer blaggard, or be the powers av darkness it's a dead man ye'll be!"

The man dropped his gun and held both hands above his head, and the other four were quick to follow his example.

"Now, what do you fellows want?" Mr. Reade asked. "You see the result of interfering with strangers."

The men made no reply, so dumfounded were they at the sudden turn of affairs.

"Right about face—march!" cried Frank, "and if you show your faces about here again before sunrise to-morrow morning, we'll make worm's meat of you!"

"But our guns, stranger?" asked one of the men. "Let us have—"

"Never mind the guns," said Frank. "We'll take care of them. You'll find them here to-morrow morning."

Another one of the men protested, saying:

"We can't do without our guns."

"March!" sternly ordered Frank again, and the villains dared not disobey.

So they turned and marched away in the direction whence they came.

Our heroes kept them covered with their revolvers till they were a hundred yards away from camp, when Frank called out to them:

"You'll find your guns here at sunrise to-morrow."

The five men turned away and disappeared in the timber up the river bank.

"That was well done, Frank," said Mr. Reade. "Your promptness, no doubt, saved us a great deal of trouble."

"Of course it did, father. My experience has taught me that when a man tries to force a fight on you, you want to get the drop on him and wind him up in short order. We'll have to move from here, though."

"Why so?"

"Because I fear those men may get others and surprise us in the night."

"But we can't continue the journey in the night."

"I don't propose to do so, but we can go about five or ten miles down the river and make another camp, and thus give those fellows the slip."

"Ah, that's a good idea."

They began immediate preparations to leave the place, as they had no desire to spend the night in the neighborhood of the victim of Barney's pistol.

Barney and Pomp divided the remains of the big catfish between them to take with them, and at a signal all four arose on the wing and sailed away, following the course of the river, just above the tree tops, to avoid being seen.

After a half hour's flight they found another and better place for a camp, to which they quickly descended.

"I think we have given them the slip nicely," said Frank, as he released himself from his flying machine.

"Dat's er fac'," remarked Pomp. "Dem ar' white trash don't know nothin' at all."

"It's right ye are, Pomp," said Barney. "The loikes of thim don't be after knowing enough to dig of ould age."

"You laid your man out nicely, Barney," said Mr. Reade.

"Shure, and wasn't it yourself that tached me how to do it whin I was a bye."

"I see you haven't forgotten the lesson," responded Mr. Reade, laughing.

"Faith, and ye towld me not to forget it."

They proceeded at once to build a fire and stretch the tent, after which they filled their pipes and indulged in the comfort of a quiet smoke, confident that they had given their enemies the slip.

At an early hour they retired to their blankets and slept soundly until the twittering of the birds at daylight awoke them.

As Barney and Pomp were rebuilding the fire Mr. Reade and Frank repaired to the river to again try their luck at fishing.

They were more successful than on the evening before, as the fish bit fiercely and ravenously, but no very large ones were caught.

They returned to the camp-fire in time to have their latest catch cooked for breakfast, after which Barney and Pomp cooked up the greater part of the big fish to serve as rations for their journey.

The journey was resumed about an hour after sunrise, and the flight continued over the arid sage brush plains toward the irregular chain of mountains beyond.

It was more than fifty miles to the next stream, which was a small and sluggish one, beyond which there was a change in the vegetation, which indicated a better quality of land, and it continued to improve the further they went.

After passing another stream they discovered a few settlements scattered here and there, and still further on they found a Mormon village of some three or four hundred inhabitants.

They did not know, however, that it was a Mormon village till after they descended, which they did for the purpose of ascertaining what place it was.

As they began to descend the people shouted and prostrated themselves on the ground.

"Why, what's the matter with them?" Mr. Reade asked, turning to Frank.

"They evidently think we are Heavenly messengers," replied Frank, "and they are Mormons."

"How do you know they are?"

"I know it because we are in Utah, and from the style and shape of their tabernacle over there."

"I guess you are right."

"I know I am," asserted Frank. "Let's have some fun with them."

"How can we?"

"By not letting them know who or what we are."

"Well, do as you think best."

Frank lifted up his voice and exclaimed:

"Let all the people rise and stand, for no harm shall befall them."

Every man, woman and child sprang to their feet and gazed, awe-stricken, at the new-comers.

"Let him that is faithful," cried Frank again, "bring us wherewith to quench our thirst and appease our hunger. We have but a short while to tarry, but a blessing shall rest forever upon his house who giveth freely. Hasten, therefore, to fetch us wine and bread, that we may no longer thirst and hunger."

Every man of them departed in eager haste to obey, fully believing that they were entertaining angels.

Soon they returned, bearing wine and bread and cake, together with brandy and whisky, and all kinds of strong drinks.

"Der Lor' gorrarnighty!" muttered Pomp, in an undertone, as two big black bottles of rye whisky were handed him by a burly Mormon, "I 'se goin' to bless dis place forebermore."

He had scarcely stowed them away in his pocket ere two more were thrust upon him, and were followed by a huge pound-cake.

Being hungry as well as thirsty, he broke off a piece of the cake, thrust it in his mouth, and washed it down with a copious draught of whisky.

Barney fared even better. A dozen rushed forward, bearing wine and strong drink, and a well-cooked saddle of venison.

The Irish jollyman filled his pack with the bottles, and seized upon the venison with voracious eagerness.

"May St. Patrick kill all av yure snakes!" he cried, in a loud voice; "an' may ye niver be dry for want av a drink!"

Frank and his father also received more good things than they could take care of.

Each of them uttered kind words as they received the gifts, and left a blessing with the donors.

Mr. Reade stepped forward, and whispered in Frank's ear:

"If we don't get away soon Pomp and Barney will be roaring drunk."

Frank looked over to his two faithful followers, and at a glance saw that his father was right.

"We go hence," he cried out to the villagers, "but in a year and a day we will return."

And with that he spread his wings and rose majestically in the air.

Barney and Pomp took the hint and followed immediately, whilst the multitude again fell prostrate on the ground, believing that they had entertained messengers from the New Jerusalem.

"Oh, golly!" exclaimed Pomp, as he soared upward; "dis am de bes' cake I eber did eat."

"Save it for supper, you glutton!" cried Frank, "and let your bottles alone, or you'll be drunk and take a tumble and break your neck!"

"Why, Marse Frank, Barney is fillin' hisself full."

"Shure an' the nagur is a liar!" returned Barney, thrusting his bottle back in his pocket. "It's my pockets is full."

"Well, I'll empty your pockets if you drink any more, either of you," said Frank, very sternly. "A man on wings must keep his head clear and cool."

"Dat's er fac," assented Pomp.

"Of course it is," added Frank. "Wait till we strike camp and we'll have a feast."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FEAST FIT FOR A KING.

FRANK and Mr. Reade laughed heartily over the deception practiced on the superstitious Mormons.

"That is the best joke I have seen in many a day," said Mr. Reade.

"Yes," replied Frank, "it was not only a practical joke, but profitable and funny as well."

"I should say it was. We have wine and liquors enough to last us through, and provisions for two or three days."

"So we have, and if we can find a good camping place to-night we can have a grand feast."

They were now near the end of the day, and began casting about for a suitable place to spend the night.

They had reached a region of well-wooded rolling land, with a chain of mountains in full view in the distance.

"We surely ought to find a stream or spring hereabouts," remarked Mr. Reade.

"I think so, too," returned Frank, "if we will look out for them."

Just before sunset they discovered a small lake, covering some forty or fifty acres, and surrounded by rugged hills.

"There is a beautiful sheet of water," remarked Frank. "We couldn't wish for a better place for a camp."

"Yes, and it's full of fish, too, for I can see them splashing water. It must be fed by some little mountain stream."

They soon reached the lake and descended to a clearing on the south side of it.

"What a beautiful, romantic spot!" cried Frank, as he gazed on the clear cold crystal sheet of water.

"Yes," said Mr. Reade, "it looks like fairyland," and he walked down to the water's edge with a tin cup to get a drink. "The water is as clear as crystal and very cold," he said.

Barney and Pomp soon had a roaring fire going and the tent up, which gave the place an air of comfort.

"Now for the feast," said Frank, and all four of them began to disgorge the good things they had received from the superstitious Mormons.

There were bottles of wine, of brandy, and of whisky, with cake and jelly, and venison and roast fowl.

"This is a feast fit for a king," said Frank, as he surveyed the display.

"Begorra, then," said Barney, "it's kings we are for once. Aven the nagur is a black king wid a crown of wool on his head."

Pomp grinned, shook his head, and replied: "Dat's a mity hard ole head, Barney."

"Faith, an' isn't it the likes of we that know it? Shake han is over the dinner, ye auld king. It's many a ruction we've had. But, be the powers, we'll faiste to-night till the stars go to slape," and the two shook hands heartily in the best of good feeling in anticipation of the feast in store for them.

"Good," exclaimed Frank, "I like to see that. Why can't you do that way every day, instead of wanting to break each other's heads?"

"Faith, an' it's the whisky," said Barney, "and the good atin'. A good dinner, a sup over the cratur, wid your pipe full of tobacco, makes a mon love all the world."

"That is true, Barney," said Mr. Reade, "and it is the true religion, which none but dyspeptics reject."

"Thru for you, Mr. Reade, an' it's meself that likes a man of that kind of religion."

They fell to and partook of the feast with the appetites of men who had long fasted.

It is needless to say they enjoyed the supper to the fullest extent of their capacity.

The meal ended, however, Frank was compelled to forbid any more liquors being drunk, as Barney and Pomp were becoming somewhat hilarious.

Pipes followed the supper, and during the smoking Barney favored the party with several genuine Irish songs. His voice was a fairly good one, but sadly lacking in cultivation. His efforts, however, were applauded to the echo.

They retired early to their blankets, and slept soundly till daylight.

Frank was the first up, and went prowling around in search of bait, determined to try his luck at fishing in the lake.

His father soon joined him, and long before the sun peeped over the hilltops they were both catching trout faster than they ever did before in their lives.

"Look here," said Frank, "we'd better tarry here a day or two. This beats all the fishing I ever saw."

"All right," replied his father. "Nothing would please me better."

So they spent the day on the lake, and when

they had ceased fishing, late in the afternoon, they estimated that the four of them had captured nearly a thousand pounds of trout, which, after reserving what was needed for the frying-pan, they threw back into the water.

That night they slept well, for they had toiled hard all day, and the next morning were off again on their western journey.

"I shall always have a desire," said Mr. Reade, as they flew over the lake, "to revisit this place again."

"I know I shall," replied Frank, "for I never had such fishing in my life."

"Dat's er fac," exclaimed Pomp. "Der fish am good, an' der water am good, an' it's a good place anyhow."

"Thru for you, Pomp," said Barney. "Bedad, an' it's the place to live anyhow."

Leaving the lake, they passed over a broken surface of country which grew more rugged as they advanced toward the mountains.

By noon they had reached a section of wild mountain scenery that baffled description.

In some places peaks of solid rock pointed skyward, having for thousands of feet not a blade of grass or a shrub upon them.

Sometimes they leaned over great gorges thousands of feet in depth, the precipitous sides of which not even a sparrow could find a resting-place on. For miles not a tree or shrub could be seen as they advanced.

"This is certainly not a very inviting place," remarked Mr. Reade.

"How would it do for a quarry?" Frank asked.

"The quarry is here, but where is the market?"

"It seems to me," continued Frank, "that these stones have been disturbed by some convulsion of nature in some period of the world's history."

"Just what I was thinking, too. It looks like the result of a volcanic eruption or an earthquake."

"I guess," returned Frank, "that there are volcanoes in this mountain range."

Along in the middle of the afternoon they reached the top of a high peak, and as they passed over it Frank cried out:

"This is the mouth of a volcano."

"I believe you are right," said his father.

"Let's step and examine it."

They flew across to the farther side of what seemed to have been an immense crater, and there found plenty of room on the top of an immense boulder to settle down in perfect safety.

There they stood for some time, gazing down into the crater of what seemed an extinct volcano.

No heat came up from it, though evidence of vast fiery eruptions in the past were seen in every direction.

The crater seemed to be at least one-eighth of a mile in diameter and the sides perpendicular.

Hundreds of feet below where they stood there seemed to be a sort of bottom of ashes, cinders, and loose stone, with great holes and gaping fissures here and there.

"It must have been terrible when in a state of eruption," commented Frank, as he gazed on the scene below.

"Yes, indeed," said his father. "A caldron of burning lava the size of this crater must indeed be a fearful sight to behold."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE EXTINCT VOLCANO—BARNEY'S TERRIBLE PERIL.

AFTER gazing on the desolate scene some time, Frank and his father concluded to descend into the crater and make a more minute examination of it.

Accordingly, they stretched their wings and flew downward several hundred feet, alighting on a crusted surface of ashes, cinders and lava.

Barney and Pomp followed, and together all four walked about, peering into the holes and crevices with a sort of shuddering curiosity.

Into some of the holes they cast stones, to sound the depth, but nothing certain could be ascertained.

Not a shrub of vegetation existed anywhere, but every stone bore traces of past fiery heat.

As they were walking about they were suddenly startled by a wild shriek from Barney, who had wandered off some twenty or thirty rods distant from the others.

They looked around quickly, only to find a cloud of dust where the Irishman was last seen.

"Der Lor' gorrarnighty!" gasped Pomp.

"Good heavens!" cried Frank, "Barney has fallen in!"

They rushed toward the spot, to find that the crust of lava and ashes over a deep fissure had given way under his weight, and that he had disappeared below from sight.

"My God!" groaned Mr. Reade, "this is horrible."

A cloud of dust ascended from the crevice dense enough to strangle one.

Frank threw himself flat on the crust, with his head close to the crevice, and silently listened, while his father and Pomp held their breath in suspense.

"I hear him coughing," he cried, "as though nearly suffocated with the dust."

"How far down is he?" his father asked.

"I can't say—it may be fifty or a hundred feet. Barney, Barney!" and he called lustily.

The coughing continued.

"Keep still," cried Frank, "until the dust settles, and we will get you out."

"How in the world we can ever get him out, I can't tell," said Mr. Reade.

"We must have a rope to let down to him," said Frank.

"But we have no rope."

"We must get one, if we have to cut up a pair of wings."

"We can fly back to that Mormon village and get a rope."

"That is a long, long way off."

"There is no other way," said Mr. Reade.

"Then you and Pomp go for it. I will remain here with Barney."

"Come, Pomp," said Mr. Reade, stretching his wings, "we must be off."

The two spread their wings and ascended quickly from the crater.

They flew with all the speed they could command, while Frank remained a faithful sentinel at the place where the Irishman had gone down.

Mr. Reade and Pomp had not flown ten miles ere the latter discovered a huge grizzly bear lying on the sunny side of one of the great bowlders.

"Ah, there's all the rope we want," said Mr. Reade. "We can make a rope 300 feet long out of his skin."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp. "Less shoot him, Marse Reade."

"Of course," replied Mr. Reade. "We must keep out of his reach and try to shoot him in the eyes."

The bear took no particular notice of them as they flew around him, until a pistol-shot from Mr. Reade gave him a severe scalp wound.

Then he arose with a roar that awoke all the echoes of the mountain.

A dozen shots followed in rapid succession, and the grizzly danced about as lively as a kitten, giving vent to his rage at finding himself unable to make a defense against his enemies.

At last a well-directed shot from Mr. Reade's revolver penetrated the brute's right ear and sent him rolling over in death agonies on the rock.

"That settles him," said Mr. Reade, "but we'll make sure he is dead before we go about him," and with that he gave him two or three more shots for good measure.

When sure the beast was dead they lit on the rock close by, and with their sharp hunting-knives proceeded to divest him of his skin.

He was an enormous bear, nearly as large as the first one they had killed, and it took them nearly a half hour to take off the skin.

"Now we must cut it into a rope, Pomp," said Mr. Reade, and they clipped off the edges, so as to make it circular in shape, and then cut it in a strip half an inch wide.

It was tedious work, with the thick coat of fur on the skin, but they were determined men, and kept steadily at the task until a rope of more than one hundred feet was secured.

"I guess this will do," said Mr. Reade. "Cut off a ten pound chunk of that steak, Pomp. We may need it for supper and breakfast."

Mr. Reade coiled the long bear-skin rope and hung it on the frame-work of his flying machine, while Pomp busied himself in securing a choice bit of the steak.

"Are you ready now?"

"Yes, sah."

"Then come ahead."

Again they spread their wings and began a rapid flight toward the extinct volcano, which they reached in a little more than three hours after their departure.

Frank was astonished at their early return.

They found him lying on the crust of lava, talking to Barney.

"He's come," yelled Pomp, as they crossed over the crest of the crater.

"Thank God!" cried Frank, as he looked up and saw them descending, and then yelled down the crevice to Barney: "Here they come, old fellow, we'll soon have you out."

"We found a grizzly and borrowed a rope from him," said Mr. Reade, as he lit close to the crevice.

"That was lucky," said Frank. "How long is the rope?"

"Something over a hundred feet, I guess."

Frank seized the coil and began letting it down, calling to Barney to look out for it.

When a little more than one-half had been lowered they felt Barney pull on it.

"Fasten it securely around you," cried Frank, "and let us know when you are ready."

In a little while they felt a sharp jerk on the rope, when they seized it and began to pull.

Slow and steadily they drew him toward the surface. Great clouds of fine gray dust filled the crevice, and Barney's incessant coughing could be plainly heard.

"We must get him out quickly, or he will be suffocated in that dust," exclaimed Frank, so they redoubled their exertions, and in a couple of minutes more landed him as limp as a wet rag, with eyes, ears, and nostrils filled with the fine dust.

He could do nothing but cough. Frank seized a bottle of brandy and poured about a gill of it down his throat.

That cleared his windpipe sufficient for him to speak.

"The saints preserve us!" he groaned. "It's most dead I am."

"Oh, you'll soon be all right," said Frank.

"Come, hurry up; let's get away from here."

"Shure an' I'm blind," said Barney. "Niver a wink can I see."

"Oh, your eyes are full of dust."

"Yis, sorr."

They had no water with which to bathe his face, so Frank took his handkerchief and dusted his head as well as he could.

Still that did not relieve his eyes.

"Can you wash your eyes in whisky?" Frank asked.

"Praise God!" he said, "I could swim in it!"

"Hold your hands, then, and catch it."

He made a bowl of both hands, and Frank poured a gill of whisky into it.

He promptly applied it to his face, but through some inextricable mistake about half of it ran down his throat.

"Does it hurt your eyes?" Frank asked.

"Niver a bit," was the reply, as he held out his hands again.

"It burnt your throat, didn't it?" Mr. Reade asked.

"Faith, and it burnt the dust out," he answered.

The second time he got the whisky well in his eyes, and made them smart to such a degree that he uttered a wild yell, and began executing a kind of blind-staggering dance.

"Catch him there, Pomp," cried Frank, "or he'll fall into the hole again."

Pomp sprang forward, and grabbed him just as one foot had slipped back into the edge of the crevice.

"My God!" yelled Frank, "they will both go down!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA.

BUT for the timely interposition of Frank and his father Barney and Pomp would both have gone down into the crevice together.

They seized and dragged them away just in time to save them from a fearful death by suffocation.

Barney groaned and struggled, and swore by all the saints in the calendar that he was as blind as a dead man.

"Keep still," ordered Frank, "or you will be a dead man. Here, take this handkerchief and rub your eyes."

He took the handkerchief and began wiping his eyes, the copious flow of tears greatly relieving him, and washing out much of the dust.

In a little while he was able to see quite well.

"Can you see how to fly now?" Frank asked.

"Yis, sorr."

"Then hurry up, and let's get away. You want to find water and take a good bath."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp. "He looks gray all over, like a rat."

They spread their wings and began flopping to get a start.

Instantly an immense cloud of great dust arose, but, fortunately for our heroes, they soon ascended above it, and passed over the top of the crater.

Frank led the way westward, and pushed forward with all the speed he could get up.

"The sun will set within an hour," he said, "and the chances are against our finding any water."

Steadily he pushed forward again, and just as the sun was disappearing below the horizon he discovered a mountain stream bounding over the crags into a deep gorge.

Turning, he followed it southward several miles, looking for a suitable place for a camp.

At last he found a spot with a clearing just large enough for them to descend one at a time. When they had all reached the earth, Pomp built a fire, whilst Barney made a rush for the water to bathe.

"Howly Moses!" he exclaimed, as he dipped his hands in the water, "it's ice wather!"

"What is the matter, Barney?" Mr. Reade asked.

"Shure, an' the wather is as cowl as ice."

"So much the better—pitch in."

Barney declined, however, to do more than bathe his face and head, and in a little while he returned to the camp-fire greatly refreshed and his face and eyes clear of dust and ashes.

Pomp broiled the steak he had brought with him, while Frank made the coffee.

Being tired and hungry, they ate heartily, smoked their pipes, and retired to their blankets early.

Late in the night they were awakened by the growling of some animal a short distance up the gorge, and they rose, expecting the camp to be attacked.

Pomp had built the fire, however, against a couple of very large fallen trees, and it continued to burn brightly all through the night.

They were, perhaps, indebted to the blaze of the fire for the protection they enjoyed, for the beast, whatever it was, did not approach near enough to be sighted.

The next morning they were up bright and early, notwithstanding their sleep had not been very refreshing, and, after a hasty breakfast, resumed their journey.

They soared upward to a high altitude, whence they obtained a magnificent view of the grand panorama spread out below them.

"There is the rich valley of California," cried Frank. "We have nearly reached the end of our journey."

"Golly!" cried Pomp, "I'm glad of dat."

"Whoop!" responded Barney. "It's the land of gould, an' it's glad I am to see it."

"We'll camp to-night," said Frank, "among the rich vineyards, where pure grape wine is cheaper than water."

They were in high spirits, and flew with eager haste to reach the promised land.

Late in the afternoon they reached the city of Merced, where their appearance created the wildest excitement, and the news of their arrival was telegraphed throughout the United States.

For the first time since leaving Readestown our heroes slept under the roof of a house.

They took quarters in the best hotel in the city and held a reception which lasted till bed-time. The best citizens of the place with their ladies called upon them, for they were familiar with the name and fame of Frank Reade, Jr.

They were urged by the citizens to stop another day with them, to give them an opportunity to extend a more formal reception to them.

"That we cannot do," said Frank, "as we lost a great deal of time enjoying ourselves on the way, and must therefore hasten on to San Francisco, from which point we intend to fly across the continent to some point on the Atlantic coast."

Resisting all entreaties to remain, our heroes left Merced the next morning at sunrise, and resumed their flight toward San Francisco.

They followed the line of the railroad to Oakland, and in all the towns and villages, the telegraph having notified the people of their coming, the entire population had turned out to see them.

In a number of towns salutes were fired in honor of the great inventor and his wonderful invention.

Our heroes, however, did not stop on the way, being anxious to reach the end of the journey.

In the afternoon they came in sight of the city of Oakland, and the magnificent bay of San Francisco.

"Shall we stop in Oakland?" Frank asked, as he saw flags flying and thousands of people in the streets.

"No," replied his father. "Let's cross the bay and have a rest."

All four of them, however, waved their handkerchiefs to the people below, and saw many thousands waved in return.

A couple of hours later they were circling over the city of San Francisco, looking for their old landing place of the days of the air-ship.

They found it at last, and gracefully descended in the midst of a vast concourse of people.

Hundreds of citizens who had made the acquaintance of Frank and his father in by-gone days rushed forward to welcome them to the city again.

Such was the pressure of the vast crowd of people who were eager to grasp their hands, that a platoon of police had to be used to clear a passage to the hotel.

There they were welcomed by the mayor of the

city, who had once before received Frank officially when he came in his air-ship.

The streets for blocks around the hotel were packed with a dense multitude clamoring to get a sight of the men who had crossed the continent on wings.

The reporters of the city papers elbowed their way into the hotel to question the flying men about the adventures of the trip. Not being able to get at either Frank or his father, they tackled Barney and Pomp, and the quaint stories they told of their adventures not only startled the good citizens when they read them in the papers the next morning, but set them in a roar as well.

Frank was astonished when he read the morning papers to find that Barney and Pomp were really the lions of the hour. They had told the truth as to every adventure, but Celtic imagination and African quaintness gave to the whole an air of Oriental romance.

He showed the account to his father, and they both laughed till the tears rolled down their faces.

Barney's adventure in the crater of the extinct volcano was graphically described, and regarded as one of the most remarkable escapes on record.

Pomp's version of Barney's attempt to wash the ashes out of his eyes with rye whisky and its result gave the people of San Francisco a chuckle that lasted the entire day.

The reporters finally, the next morning after their arrival, managed to interview Frank and his father, and from them obtained a more scientific report of the trip and the working of the flying machine.

During the day many hundreds of ladies called at the hotel to see the young inventor and the men who had flown like eagles in mid-air.

In spite of all they could do Frank and his father were compelled to hold a continuous reception in the parlors of the great hotel.

The arrival of the President of the United States would have created more interest nor aroused more enthusiasm.

When the day ended our heroes were more wearied than on any day since leaving home, and they protested vigorously against any more hand-shaking or receptions.

"That is the penalty of fame, Mr. Reade," remarked the mayor of the city.

"But I'll not pay any more penalty," protested Frank. "We will give an exhibition to-morrow of the machine, and fly around about over the city for an hour, after which, if they do not leave us alone, we will leave."

That night Frank and his father retired early to their room, leaving word at the desk that they were not to be disturbed.

Barney and Pomp, however, enjoyed their notoriety, and spent hours talking with whomever chose to ask them questions, at the same time keeping up their spirits by pouring spirits down.

They retired to their quarters about midnight, to which they were led by servants of the house, who saw they were too full to find their way without a guide.

The next morning they both had heads considerably enlarged, and Barney told Pomp that his cranium felt so heavy that he didn't believe his wings could lift him.

"Psho," said Pomp, "dat's nothin', Barney. My head's bigger dan dat balloon you buckled."

During the day our heroes gave an exhibition of the flying qualities of the new invention, when it seems the entire population of the city turned out to witness it.

For upwards of an hour they circled around over the city and bay, during which time they were saluted by cannon and the whistles of steamers in the harbor.

The performance over, they descended again to their hotel, and began preparations to start on their return trip.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN SAN FRANCISCO.

DURING the evening of their second day in the city Frank received telegram congratulations from all over the country. Old friends that he had not heard of for years telegraphed him, and to those he responded, extending his thanks.

After consultation with his father, it was decided to return home by way of the Union Pacific R. R., flying about a quarter of a mile above the track all the way.

They thought that by taking that route they would avoid the annoyance of camp life, as they could stop in the towns along the way every night.

Just before they were to start a distinguished army officer called upon Frank and suggested that his invention would be worth more to the United States in the event of war with a foreign power than an army of 100,000 men, and advised him not to allow the secret of the invention to pass out of this country.

"I do not intend to," replied Frank, "for all that I have, including myself, belong unreservedly to my country when she has need of me."

"I am glad to hear that," replied the officer. "It is the most wonderful invention of the age, and I doubt not that any of the European governments would pay millions to own it."

"I am sure of that, for I have been visited by agents from nearly every European country, who made brilliant offers for my air-ships, which are really more valuable than this, but I would not sell."

"You are all right, I see," remarked the officer, "and my visit was entirely unnecessary."

"Entirely so," returned Frank; "but I am glad to meet you, for all that," and they shook hands cordially as the officer retired.

At the appointed time our heroes took leave of the mayor and other city officials, and ascended from one of the public squares in the presence of a vast concourse of people.

They began their eastern trip by making straight across the bay to the city of Oakland, over which city they passed a couple of hours later, and pushed on toward Sacramento, at which city all sorts of signals were used to induce them to stop.

But they would not, so they pushed on up the Sierra Nevada mountains, over which they passed, reaching Reno about sunset.

News had been telegraphed to Reno the day before that the four flying men would probably stop there for the night. Hundreds of miners from Carson City and Virginia City had crowded into Reno to receive them.

As our heroes descended into the street near the railroad depot, they met the wildest crowd of western miners they had ever seen.

Every man wore a red shirt and a brace of revolvers, but they were all friends of the flying men.

The only danger that menaced Frank and his party was in the utter impossibility to drink with every man who asked them.

But the miners were good-natured, and not disposed to resent a refusal to drink.

So many had crowded into the town that hundreds were unable to find quarters for the night.

They paraded the streets singing songs, shouting, and firing their revolvers all night long.

"Another such a night as this," said Mr. Reade the next morning, "and I shall be in favor of camping out in the woods."

"So will I," replied Frank, "for I slept very little last night."

Taking an early breakfast, they left Reno much sooner than the people expected, hence many failed to see them off.

"I'm glad to get out of that place," said Frank. "They are about the roughest set I ever saw."

"Where are we to stop to-night?" his father asked.

"At Palisade, if we can reach there."

The day passed without any incident of note occurring, and they pushed on, keeping the railroad in sight.

The engineer of every train that passed saluted them with his whistle, and in a number of little towns salutes were fired.

They reached Palisade a little before sunset, to find a much more orderly crowd than they expected.

They were given a hearty reception, and the next morning rushed on toward Great Salt Lake. "We are to be at Salt Lake City to-night," said Frank, "and it will push us hard to make it."

"It has been many years since I have seen it," remarked his father, "and I would like to see it again, so we must make it if we can."

"I think we can cut off about twenty miles," said Frank, "by cutting across the direct straight from Wells on the railroad and passing over the lower end of the lake instead of following the railroad around the upper end."

"Let's do that by all means, then, for twenty miles makes a great difference in a long flight."

When they reached Wells they turned in a southeasterly direction, and struck what is called the Great American Desert, a vast stretch of sandy plain as barren of vegetation as the Great Desert of Sahara.

"I believe this great sandy region," said Frank, as he flew alongside of his father, "was once the bed of an immense inland salt sea."

"I believe that is the theory of some distinguished geologists, and I have no reason to doubt the correctness of it. It has been said that Great Salt Lake is the remains of an inland sea."

"But what do you think caused the sea to disappear?" Frank asked.

"That is more than I can say. It may have been evaporation, and yet the presence of the lake dispels the idea."

"Yes," said Frank, "I should think so. By the way, we ought to strike the lake pretty soon."

But hour after hour passed, and still they

were hovering over the desert. Along in the middle of the afternoon, however, they caught sight of the great lake in the hazy distance.

"Dar it is!" cried Pomp, who was the first to see it.

"Yes," said Frank; "that's the lake. The city is on the other side at the lower end. I think we can reach the city before sunset."

In due time they reached the lake, and a more desolate sheet of water they had never seen.

No ships nor towns nor villages nor any animal nor vegetable life could be seen on its western shore.

A couple of hours' flight over the water brought into view the island that rose in the water a few miles out from the city.

Then, when they reached the island, the great dome of the Mormon tabernacle, the most conspicuous building in the city, could be plainly seen.

The dome was covered with tin, which reflected the rays of the declining sun in fitful flashes as our heroes advanced toward it.

Smaller objects came into plainer view as they approached.

"The city is well laid out," remarked Mr. Reade.

"Yes," replied Frank. "I have seen it three times before, and I notice that it continues to improve both in extent and architectural beauty. But for their detestable religion, I would say that the Mormons were a blessing to this part of the world. But for their settlement here probably no white man would ever have stopped within a hundred miles of this lake."

"I guess you are right," said his father. "They have developed this region wonderfully. They seem to be good farmers and very industrious."

"Yes, no doubt about their industry, but they are fanatical about the dogmas of their church, and believe it is no sin to kill a Gentile in cold blood for the mere expression of an opinion."

"All of which will be righted in time," observed Mr. Reade. "But look—the streets are filled with people. They must be looking for our arrival."

"Of course they are. Men flying through the air is a sight that seems incredible to almost every human being. In the pagan world we would be looked upon as gods by the whole people."

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN our heroes arrived directly over the city they were somewhat puzzled to know where to alight.

There were so many large private gardens scattered about that it was difficult to decide which were the public squares.

At last they decided to descend in the middle of one of the public streets on which there were but few people.

The descent was made quickly, and they were received with shouts of welcome from Mormons and Gentiles alike.

A vast crowd soon gathered around them, and they experienced great difficulty in reaching their hotel. When they did they put off their machines, locked them in their rooms, and called for supper.

Such a crowd of people gathered around the hotel clamoring to see the young inventor that the landlord became alarmed, and, rushing into the dining-room, entreated Frank to go out and speak to them.

"All right," he said. "Go back and tell them I'll be out in ten minutes. I'm going to finish my supper if they pull the house down."

After finishing the meal Frank went out on the balcony of the hotel, accompanied by the landlord, who said to the vast crowd in the streets below:

"This is the famous inventor."

The people shouted themselves hoarse cheering the inventor whose name and fame had gone around the world.

When silence was restored Frank began to speak. He related, in an easy, off-hand way, the story of the trip across the Continent, and told them about the wonders of the mountains and plains of the vast country south of them.

"There are rivers, lakes and mountains," he said, "in the great region south of Salt Lake and north of the borders of Mexico about which the world knows but little. This invention of mine will enable explorers to penetrate regions heretofore shut against man. With it he can scale inaccessible mountains, look down the throats of yawning craters, and bid defiance to every foe of man except the elements. But when the God of nature flashes the electric lightning and blows his breath among the beetling crags, then man must yield and cease to oppose, and wait again

"My God!" groaned Mr. Reade, "this is horrible."

A cloud of dust ascended from the crevice dense enough to strangle one.

Frank threw himself flat on the crust, with his head close to the crevice, and silently listened, while his father and Pomp held their breath in suspense.

"I hear him coughing," he cried, "as though nearly suffocated with the dust."

"How far down is he?" his father asked.

"I can't say—it may be fifty or a hundred feet. 'Barney, Barney!' and he called lustily.

The coughing continued.

"Keep still," cried Frank, "until the dust settles, and we will get you out."

"How in the world we can ever get him out, I can't tell," said Mr. Reade.

"We must have a rope to let down to him," said Frank.

"But we have no rope."

"We must get one, if we have to cut up a pair of wings."

"We can fly back to that Mormon village and get a rope."

"That is a long, long way off."

"There is no other way," said Mr. Reade.

"Then you and Pomp go for it. I will remain here with Barney."

"Come, Pomp," said Mr. Reade, stretching his wings, "we must be off."

The two spread their wings and ascended quickly from the crater.

They flew with all the speed they could command, while Frank remained a faithful sentinel at the place where the Irishman had gone down.

Mr. Reade and Pomp had not flown ten miles ere the latter discovered a huge grizzly bear lying on the sunny side of one of the great bowl-dens.

"Ah, there's all the rope we want," said Mr. Reade. "We can make a rope 300 feet long out of his skin."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp. "Less shoot him, Marse Reade."

"Of course," replied Mr. Reade. "We must keep out of his reach and try to shoot him in the eyes."

The bear took no particular notice of them as they flew around him, until a pistol-shot from Mr. Reade gave him a severe scalp wound.

Then he arose with a roar that awoke all the echoes of the mountain.

A dozen shots followed in rapid succession, and the grizzly danced about as lively as a kitten, giving vent to his rage at finding himself unable to make a defense against his enemies.

At last a well-directed shot from Mr. Reade's revolver penetrated the brute's right ear and sent him rolling over in death agonies on the rock.

"That settles him," said Mr. Reade, "but we'll make sure he is dead before we go about him," and with that he gave him two or three more shots for good measure.

When sure the beast was dead they lit on the rock close by, and with their sharp hunting-knives proceeded to divest him of his skin.

He was an enormous bear, nearly as large as the first one they had killed, and it took them nearly a half hour to take off the skin.

"Now we must cut it into a rope, Pomp," said Mr. Reade, and they clipped off the edges, so as to make it circular in shape, and then cut it in a strip half an inch wide.

It was tedious work, with the thick coat of fur on the skin, but they were determined men, and kept steadily at the task until a rope of more than one hundred feet was secured.

"I guess this will do," said Mr. Reade. "Cut off a ten pound chunk of that steak, Pomp. We may need it for supper and breakfast."

Mr. Reade coiled the long bear-skin rope and hung it on the frame-work of his flying machine, while Pomp busied himself in securing a choice bit of the steak.

"Are you ready now?"

"Yes, sah."

"Then come ahead."

Again they spread their wings and began a rapid flight toward the extinct volcano, which they reached in a little more than three hours after their departure.

Frank was astonished at their early return.

They found him lying on the crust of lava, talking to Barney.

"He's come," yelled Pomp, as they crossed over the crest of the crater.

"Thank God!" cried Frank, as he looked up and saw them descending, and then yelled down the crevice to Barney: "Here they come, old fellow, we'll soon have you out."

"We found a grizzly and borrowed a rope from him," said Mr. Reade, as he lit close to the crevice.

"That was lucky," said Frank. "How long is the rope?"

"Something over a hundred feet, I guess."

Frank seized the coil and began letting it down, calling to Barney to look out for it.

When a little more than one-half had been lowered they felt Barney pull on it.

"Fasten it securely around you," cried Frank, "and let us know when you are ready."

In a little while they felt a sharp jerk on the rope, when they seized it and began to pull.

Slow and steadily they drew him toward the surface. Great clouds of fine gray dust filled the crevice, and Barney's incessant coughing could be plainly heard.

"We must get him out quickly, or he will be suffocated in that dust," exclaimed Frank, so they redoubled their exertions, and in a couple of minutes more landed him as limp as a wet rag, with eyes, ears, and nostrils filled with the fine dust.

He could do nothing but cough. Frank seized a bottle of brandy and poured about a gill of it down his throat.

That cleared his windpipe sufficient for him to speak.

"The saints preserve us!" he groaned. "It's most dead I am."

"Oh, you'll soon be all right," said Frank. "Come, hurry up; let's get away from here."

"Shure an' I'm bloind," said Barney. "Niver a wink can I see."

"Oh, your eyes are full of dust."

"Yis, sorr."

They had no water with which to bathe his face, so Frank took his handkerchief and dusted his head as well as he could.

Still that did not relieve his eyes.

"Can you wash your eyes in whisky?" Frank asked.

"Plaise God!" he said, "I could swim in it!"

"Hold your hands, then, and catch it."

He made a bowl of both hands, and Frank poured a gill of whisky into it.

He promptly applied it to his face, but through some inextricable mistake about half of it ran down his throat.

"Does it hurt your eyes?" Frank asked.

"Niver a bit," was the reply, as he held out his hands again.

"It burnt your throat, didn't it?" Mr. Reade asked.

"Faith, and it burnt the dust out," he answered.

The second time he got the whisky well in his eyes, and made them smart to such a degree that he uttered a wild yell, and began executing a kind of blind-staggering dance.

"Catch him there, Pomp," cried Frank, "or he'll fall into the hole again."

Pomp sprang forward, and grabbed him just as one foot had slipped back into the edge of the crevice.

"My God!" yelled Frank, "they will both go down!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA.

BUT for the timely interposition of Frank and his father Barney and Pomp would both have gone down into the crevice together.

They seized and dragged them away just in time to save them from a fearful death by suffocation.

Barney groaned and struggled, and swore by all the saints in the calendar that he was as blind as a dead man.

"Keep still," ordered Frank, "or you will be a dead man. Here, take this handkerchief and rub your eyes."

He took the handkerchief and began wiping his eyes, the copious flow of tears greatly relieving him, and washing out much of the dust.

In a little while he was able to see quite well.

"Can you see how to fly now?" Frank asked.

"Yis, sorr."

"Then hurry up, and let's get away. You want to find water and take a good bath."

"Dat's er fac," said Pomp. "He looks gray all over, like a rat."

They spread their wings and began flopping to get a start.

Instantly an immense cloud of great dust arose, but, fortunately for our heroes, they soon ascended above it, and passed over the top of the crater.

Frank led the way westward, and pushed forward with all the speed he could get up.

"The sun will set within an hour," he said, "and the chances are against our finding any water."

Steadily he pushed forward again, and just as the sun was disappearing below the horizon he discovered a mountain stream bounding over the crags into a deep gorge. Turning, he followed it southward several miles, looking for a suitable place for a camp.

At last he found a spot with a clearing just large enough for them to descend one at a time. When they had all reached the earth, Pomp built a fire, whilst Barney made a rush for the water to bathe.

"How's Moses!" he exclaimed, as he dipped his hands in the water, "it's ice wather!"

"What is the matter, Barney?" Mr. Reade asked.

"Shure, an' the wather is as cowl as ice."

"So much the better—pitch in."

Barney declined, however, to do more than bathe his face and head, and in a little while he returned to the camp-fire greatly refreshed and his face and eyes clear of dust and ashes.

Pomp broiled the steak he had brought with him, while Frank made the coffee.

Being tired and hungry, they ate heartily, smoked their pipes, and retired to their blankets early.

Late in the night they were awakened by the growling of some animal a short distance up the gorge, and they rose, expecting the camp to be attacked.

Pomp had built the fire, however, against a couple of very large fallen trees, and it continued to burn brightly all through the night.

They were, perhaps, indebted to the blaze of the fire for the protection they enjoyed, for the beast, whatever it was, did not approach near enough to be sighted.

The next morning they were up bright and early, notwithstanding their sleep had not been very refreshing, and, after a hasty breakfast, resumed their journey.

They soared upward to a high altitude, whence they obtained a magnificent view of the grand panorama spread out below them.

"There is the rich valley of California," cried Frank. "We have nearly reached the end of our journey."

"Golly!" cried Pomp, "I see glad of dat."

"Whoop!" responded Barney. "It's the land of gould, an' it's glad I am to see it."

"We'll camp to-night," said Frank, "among the rich vineyards, where pure grape wine is cheaper than water."

They were in high spirits, and flew with eager haste to reach the promised land.

Late in the afternoon they reached the city of Merced, where their appearance created the wildest excitement, and the news of their arrival was telegraphed throughout the United States.

For the first time since leaving Redestown our heroes slept under the roof of a house.

They took quarters in the best hotel in the city and held a reception which lasted till bed-time. The best citizens of the place with their ladies called upon them, for they were familiar with the name and fame of Frank Reade, Jr.

They were urged by the citizens to stop another day with them, to give them an opportunity to extend a more formal reception to them.

"That we cannot do," said Frank, "as we lost a great deal of time enjoying ourselves on the way, and must therefore hasten on to San Francisco, from which point we intend to fly across the continent to some point on the Atlantic coast."

Resisting all entreaties to remain, our heroes left Merced the next morning at sunrise, and resumed their flight toward San Francisco.

They followed the line of the railroad to Oakland, and in all the towns and villages, the telegraph having notified the people of their coming, the entire population had turned out to see them.

In a number of towns salutes were fired in honor of the great inventor and his wonderful invention.

Our heroes, however, did not stop on the way, being anxious to reach the end of the journey.

In the afternoon they came in sight of the city of Oakland, and the magnificent bay of San Francisco.

"Shall we stop in Oakland?" Frank asked, as he saw flags flying and thousands of people in the streets.

"No," replied his father. "Let's cross the bay and have a rest."

All four of them, however, waved their handkerchiefs to the people below, and saw many thousands waved in return.

A couple of hours later they were circling over the city of San Francisco, looking for their old landing place of the days of the air-ship.

They found it at last, and gracefully descended in the midst of a vast concourse of people.

Hundreds of citizens who had made the acquaintance of Frank and his father in by-gone days rushed forward to welcome them to the city again.

Such was the pressure of the vast crowd of people who were eager to grasp their hands, that a platoon of police had to be used to clear a passage to the hotel.

There they were welcomed by the mayor of the

city, who had once before received Frank officially when he came in his air-ship.

The streets for blocks around the hotel were packed with a dense multitude clamoring to get a sight of the men who had crossed the continent on wings.

The reporters of the city papers elbowed their way into the hotel to question the flying men about the adventures of the trip. Not being able to get at either Frank or his father, they tackled Barney and Pomp, and the quaint stories they told of their adventures not only startled the good citizens when they read them in the papers the next morning, but set them in a roar as well.

Frank was astonished when he read the morning papers to find that Barney and Pomp were really the lions of the hour. They had told the truth as to every adventure, but Celtic imagination and African quaintness gave to the whole an air of Oriental romance.

He showed the account to his father, and they both laughed till the tears rolled down their faces.

Barney's adventure in the crater of the extinct volcano was graphically described, and regarded as one of the most remarkable escapes on record.

Pomp's version of Barney's attempt to wash the ashes out of his eyes with rye whiskey and its result gave the people of San Francisco a chuckle that lasted the entire day.

The reporters finally, the next morning after their arrival, managed to interview Frank and his father, and from them obtained a more scientific report of the trip and the working of the flying machine.

During the day many hundreds of ladies called at the hotel to see the young inventor and the men who had flown like eagles in mid-air.

In spite of all they could do Frank and his father were compelled to hold a continuous reception in the parlors of the great hotel.

The arrival of the President of the United States would not have created more interest nor aroused more enthusiasm.

When the day ended our heroes were more wearied than on any day since leaving home, and they protested vigorously against any more hand-shaking or receptions.

"That is the penalty of fame, Mr. Reade," remarked the mayor of the city.

"But I'll not pay any more penalty," protested Frank. "We will give an exhibition to-morrow of the machine, and fly around about over the city for an hour, after which, if they do not leave us alone, we will leave."

That night Frank and his father retired early to their room, leaving word at the desk that they were not to be disturbed.

Barney and Pomp, however, enjoyed their noisiness, and spent hours talking with whom-ever chose to ask them questions, at the same time keeping up their spirits by pouring spirits down.

They retired to their quarters about midnight, to which they were led by servants of the house, who saw they were too full to find their way without a guide.

The next morning they both had heads considerably enlarged, and Barney told Pomp that his cranium felt so heavy that he didn't believe his wings could lift him.

"Psho," said Pomp, "dat's nothin', Barney. My head's bigger dan dat balloon you buckled."

During the day our heroes gave an exhibition of the flying qualities of the new invention, when it seems the entire population of the city turned out to witness it.

For upwards of an hour they circled around over the city and bay, during which time they were saluted by cannon and the whistles of steamers in the harbor.

The performance over, they descended again to their hotel, and began preparations to start on their return trip.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN SAN FRANCISCO.

DURING the evening of their second day in the city Frank received telegram congratulations from all over the country. Old friends that he had not heard of for years telegraphed him, and to those he responded, extending his thanks.

After consultation with his father, it was decided to return home by way of the Union Pacific R. R., flying about a quarter of a mile above the track all the way.

They thought that by taking that route they would avoid the annoyance of camp life, as they could stop in the towns along the way every night.

Just before they were to start a distinguished army officer called upon Frank and suggested that his invention would be worth more to the United States in the event of war with a foreign power than an army of 100,000 men, and advised him not to allow the secret of the invention to pass out of this country.

"I do not intend to," replied Frank, "for all that I have, including myself, belong unreservedly to my country when she has need of me."

"I am glad to hear that," replied the officer. "It is the most wonderful invention of the age, and I doubt not that any of the European governments would pay millions to own it."

"I am sure of that, for I have been visited by agents from nearly every European country, who made brilliant offers for my air-ships, which are really more valuable than this, but I would not sell."

"You are all right, I see," remarked the officer, "and my visit was entirely unnecessary."

"Entirely so," returned Frank; "but I am glad to meet you, for all that," and they shook hands cordially as the officer retired.

At the appointed time our heroes took leave of the mayor and other city officials, and ascended from one of the public squares in the presence of a vast concourse of people.

They began their eastern trip by making straight across the bay to the city of Oakland, over which city they passed a couple of hours later, and pushed on toward Sacramento, at which city all sorts of signals were used to induce them to stop.

But they would not, so they pushed on up the Sierra Nevada mountains, over which they passed, reaching Reno about sunset.

News had been telegraphed to Reno the day before that the four flying men would probably stop there for the night. Hundreds of miners from Carson City and Virginia City had crowded into Reno to receive them.

As our heroes descended into the street near the railroad depot, they met the wildest crowd of western miners they had ever seen.

Every man wore a red shirt and a brace of revolvers, but they were all friends of the flying men.

The only danger that menaced Frank and his party was in the utter impossibility to drink with every man who asked them.

But the miners were good-natured, and not disposed to resent a refusal to drink.

So many had crowded into the town that hundreds were unable to find quarters for the night. They paraded the streets singing songs, shouting, and firing their revolvers all night long.

"Another such a night as this," said Mr. Reade the next morning, "and I shall be in favor of camping out in the woods."

"So will I," replied Frank, "for I slept very little last night."

Taking an early breakfast, they left Reno much sooner than the people expected, hence many failed to see them off.

"I'm glad to get out of that place," said Frank. "They are about the roughest set I ever saw."

"Where are we to stop to-night?" his father asked.

"At Palisade, if we can reach there."

The day passed without any incident of note occurring, and they pushed on, keeping the railroad in sight.

The engineer of every train that passed saluted them with his whistle, and in a number of little towns salutes were fired.

They reached Palisade a little before sunset, to find a much more orderly crowd than they expected.

They were given a hearty reception, and the next morning rushed on toward Great Salt Lake. "We are to be at Salt Lake City to-night," said Frank, "and it will push us hard to make it."

"It has been many years since I have seen it," remarked his father, "and I would like to see it again, so we must make it if we can."

"I think we can cut off about twenty miles," said Frank, "by cutting across the direct straight from Wells on the railroad and passing over the lower end of the lake instead of following the railroad around the upper end."

"Let's do that by all means, then, for twenty miles makes a great difference in a long flight."

When they reached Wells they turned in a southeasterly direction, and struck what is called the Great American Desert, a vast stretch of sandy plain as barren of vegetation as the Great Desert of Sahara.

"I believe this great sandy region," said Frank, as he flew alongside of his father, "was once the bed of an immense inland salt sea."

"I believe that is the theory of some distinguished geologists, and I have no reason to doubt the correction of it. It has been said that Great Salt Lake is the remains of an inland sea."

"But what do you think caused the sea to disappear?" Frank asked.

"That is more than I can say. It may have been evaporation, and yet the presence of the lake dispels the idea."

"Yes," said Frank, "I should think so. By the way, we ought to strike the lake pretty soon."

But hour after hour passed, and still they

were hovering over the desert. Along in the middle of the afternoon, however, they caught sight of the great lake in the hazy distance.

"Dar it is!" cried Pomp, who was the first to see it.

"Yes," said Frank; "that's the lake. The city is on the other side at the lower end. I think we can reach the city before sunset."

In due time they reached the lake, and a more desolate sheet of water they had never seen.

No ships nor towns nor villages nor any animal nor vegetable life could be seen on its western shore.

A couple of hours' flight over the water brought into view the island that rose in the water a few miles out from the city.

Then, when they reached the island, the great dome of the Mormon tabernacle, the most conspicuous building in the city, could be plainly seen.

The dome was covered with tin, which reflected the rays of the declining sun in fitful flashes as our heroes advanced toward it.

Smaller objects came into plainer view as they approached.

"The city is well laid out," remarked Mr. Reade.

"Yes," replied Frank. "I have seen it three times before, and I notice that it continues to improve both in extent and architectural beauty. But for their detestable religion, I would say that the Mormons were a blessing to this part of the world. But for their settlement here probably no white man would ever have stopped within a hundred miles of this lake."

"I guess you are right," said his father. "They have developed this region wonderfully. They seem to be good farmers and very industrious."

"Yes, no doubt about their industry, but they are fanatical about the dogmas of their church, and believe it is no sin to kill a Gentile in cold blood for the mere expression of an opinion."

"All of which will be righted in time," observed Mr. Reade. "But look—the streets are filled with people. They must be looking for our arrival."

"Of course they are. Men flying through the air is a sight that seems incredible to almost every human being. In the pagan world we would be looked upon as gods by the whole people."

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN our heroes arrived directly over the city they were somewhat puzzled to know where to alight.

There were so many large private gardens scattered about that it was difficult to decide which were the public squares.

At last they decided to descend in the middle of one of the public streets on which there were but few people.

The descent was made quickly, and they were received with shouts of welcome from Mormons and Gentiles alike.

A vast crowd soon gathered around them, and they experienced great difficulty in reaching their hotel. When they did they put off their machines, locked them in their rooms, and called for supper.

Such a crowd of people gathered around the hotel clamoring to see the young inventor that the landlord became alarmed, and, rushing into the dining-room, entreated Frank to go out and speak to them.

"All right," he said. "Go back and tell them I'll be out in ten minutes. I'm going to finish my supper if they pull the house down."

After finishing the meal Frank went out on the balcony of the hotel, accompanied by the landlord, who said to the vast crowd in the streets below:

"This is the famous inventor."

The people shouted themselves hoarse cheering the inventor whose name and fame had gone around the world.

When silence was restored Frank began to speak. He related, in an easy, off-hand way, the story of the trip across the Continent, and told them about the wonders of the mountains and plains of the vast country south of them.

"There are rivers, lakes and mountains," he said, "in the great region south of Salt Lake and north of the borders of Mexico about which the world knows but little. This invention of mine will enable explorers to penetrate regions heretofore shut against man. With it he can scale inaccessible mountains, look down the throats of yawning craters, and bid defiance to every foe of man except the elements. But when the God of nature flashes the electric lightning and blows his breath among the beetling crags, then man must yield and cease to oppose, and wait again

for the return of sunshine and balmy air. The limits of human ingenuity have been by no means reached. I believe the time is not far distant when it will be as common for people to fly through the air as to walk on the earth. I thank you very much on behalf of my father and myself for this kind reception, for it shows we have not lost your esteem simply because we are high-flyers."

As he bowed and retired, the roar of the multitude in applause was almost like the sea in a storm.

Hundreds crowded into the hotel to shake hands with him, and despite his protests he was forced to hold a sort of levee a couple of hours.

After that they retired and slept till morning without their slumbers having been disturbed.

Shortly after sunrise they fastened on the machines and ascended to the roof of the hotel, from which they proposed to start on their day's journey.

A great many people were out in the streets to see them off, and as they passed over the city they were cheered on the way with lusty voices.

It is not necessary to relate all the incidents that occurred on their return trip across the plains, as it would be a repetition of the old, old story.

At each town they passed along the line of the railroad they saw banners waving and salutes fired until the thing became monotonous.

In due course of time they arrived at Omaha, where Mrs. Reade and Frank's wife met them, having come down to the city the day before.

The meeting was a joyous one, for they had been gone nearly a month.

"Frank, my boy," said his father, "I'm going home on the train. You can take Barney and Pomp, if you wish, and keep on till you have crossed the continent. I'm a little too old now to be much of a high-flyer."

"Well, I suppose it's no use my saying anything," said Frank, "since mother is here to have her way about it."

"Of course it's no use," said his mother, laughing, "for this is his last trip. The idea of a grandfather flying about the country like a bird. I declare it's perfectly absurd."

They all laughed heartily, and so it was arranged that Mr. Reade was to return home with

his family to Readestown, while Frank went on to New York to visit his old friends.

Barney and Pomp were called in and asked if they were willing to continue on to New York, and to the surprise of Frank both were eager to go.

"Very well," he said, "we'll start to-morrow morning."

So early the next morning Frank took leave of his wife and his father and mother, and with Pomp and Barney resumed the flight.

Passing over the Mississippi, he found that the people in the country and in the towns and villages were on the lookout for him.

It was one continuous ovation.

He followed up the Ohio river, to take in the great towns on the banks of that beautiful stream.

Louisville, Cincinnati, and Pittsburg were passed, and then they pushed on over the Alleghanies and passed the great coal and iron regions of Pennsylvania.

In due time the great city of Philadelphia loomed up in the distance.

He stopped in Philadelphia to spend the night there, putting up at one of the fine hotels for which the city is justly famous, where scores of old friends called on him and congratulated him on his new triumph.

They gave him a reception that was cordial and hearty, though informal, and it was with great difficulty he could get away from them long enough to get a few hours of sleep.

The next morning he was off again, winging his way toward the metropolis of the nation.

He passed over Trenton, New Brunswick and other cities of New Jersey, and finally sighted the city and bay of New York.

"There's the Atlantic Ocean!" he cried, and, as he caught sight of the blue expanse of water away in the horizon, he added: "We have crossed the continent on wings!"

Not wishing to run the risk of becoming entangled among the telegraph wires in the city, he settled down in a little park over in Jersey City and crossed the ferry, taking a carriage on the New York side and driving to his hotel.

The ink on the book where he registered his name at the hotel was scarcely dry, when he felt

a tap on the shoulder, and turning around, found himself face to face with his old friend Harry.

"Frank, old man, how are you? How is it?" greeted Harry.

"Bully!" answered Frank, as he grasped his hand and shook it warmly. "I am glad to see you! You missed the greatest excursion the world ever saw!"

"I know I did, Frank, but I got enough of it. The fact is, I haven't yet got over my scare. I never could have enjoyed another flight after that fall."

"Have you kept the secret?" Frank asked.

"I have, and no one knows of it to this day."

"Well, I'm sorry you were not along with us. We had fun, adventures and hair-breadth escapes enough to fill a volume the size of Webster's Dictionary."

"I don't doubt it," said Harry. "I want you and Pomp and Barney to go home with me and stay a week."

"Thank you, Harry; I think I'll accept your invitation just for a rest. The fact is I feel dreadfully bored."

"Very well; we'll take a carriage and leave at once, before the reporters get after you."

They left the hotel and went home with Harry, where they found rest and quiet after the exciting scenes of the past month.

But the reporters soon found Frank out, and to them he related the story of his great trip across the continent on wings.

Its publication created a great sensation, and in a few days he was forced to give an exhibition of the workings of his flying machine.

After a few more days of quiet rest they again started out to return to their western home, which they reached after a flight of four days, which made his flights equal to two trips across the continent.

His reception at Readestown was a grand ovation, for all of his neighbors were justly proud of the young inventor whose inventions had made their beautiful town known to all the world.

There we leave him for the present, confident that his wonderful genius will soon startle the world with some other and greater invention.

[THE END.]

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